Today's

The Herald-Palladium

included inside

Benton Harbor wins big over Brandywine

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Dowagiac News

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Meet the 2026 contestants for Miss Dowagiac pageant

SUBMITTED

DOWAGIAC — Pageantry returns this month as the 2026 Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant will be held Saturday, January 24, at the Dowagiac Middle School Performing Arts Center.

Eleven contestants will be vying for College of Choice Scholarships as well as for an opportunity to serve as Miss Dowagiac and on the Court of Honor. Each will be judged based on personal interviews and pageant night presentation skills including platform speeches.

Tickets are available before pageant night for $15 each at advance ticket sale locations and times, and must be paid for by cash or check. Tickets can be purchased from noon to 3 p.m. Monday, Jan. 12 at Imperial Furniture, 57530 M51 South, Dowagiac, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. January 15 and 21.

Night of pageant ticket price is $20 each. Venue doors will open at 5 p.m. The show will begin at 6 p.m.

Attendees on pageant night will have the opportunity to wish their favorite contestants well by purchasing Happy Message Flowers for $10 (cash or check only) that will be gifted to the contestants backstage. Profits from sales benefit the Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Fund.

The Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant is an annual Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce event, and 2026 marks the Pageant's 85th year.

Contestants include the following:

Dakota Higgins

Sage Gordon

Bree Behnke

Isabella Razo

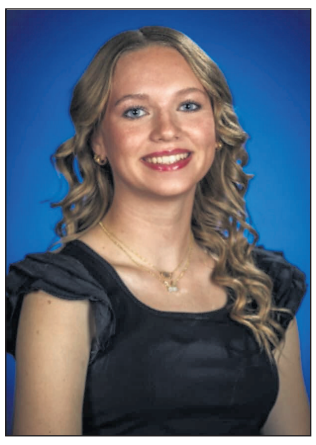
Olivia Stockwell

Marlie Carpenter

Mya Vazquez

Haley Henry

Aalyiah Northrop



Johannah McDonald

Amiah Hall

Dakota Higgins

Contestant Number: 1
Parents/Guardians: Jessica and Joe Bober
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School
Platform title: "An Unexpected Spark"

Sage Gordon

Contestant: 2
Parents/Guardians: Bobby and Shelly Gordon
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School
Platform title: "Be You Loudly"

Bree Behnke

Contestant Number: 3
Parents/Guardians: Mike and Stacy Behnke
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School. Dual-enrolled at SMC
Platform title: "Fuel Her Future"

Isabella Razo

Contestant Number: 4
Parents: Jose Razo, Coral Navarro-Razo(step mom), Anny Razo-Castillo
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School
Platform title: "What A Laugh Can Do"

Olivia Stockwell

Contestant Number: 5
Parents/Guardians: Gene and Denise Stockwell
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School and dual enrolled at SMC
Platform title: "Follow Your Passion"

Marlie Carpenter

Contestant Number: 6
Parents/Guardians: Christina and Robert Carpenter
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School and dual enrolled at SMC
Platform title: "Be You"

Mya Vazquez

Contestant Number: 7
Parents/Guardians: Hector and Jennifer Vazquez
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School and Van Buren Tech
Platform title: "Value of Life"

Haley Henry

Contestant Number: 8
Parents/Guardians: Bryan and Shelly Henry
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School and dual enrolled at SMC
Platform title: "Serve, Eat, Repeat"

Aalyiah Northrop

Contestant Number: 9
Parents/Guardians: Scott Northrop and Kimberly Northrop
School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School
Platform title: "Kindness"

Johannah McDonald

Contestant Number: #10
Parents/Guardians: Justin and Melissa McDonald
School Attending:

See **CONTESTANTS**, page A6

DOWAGIAC

Residents push back against data center expansion

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

DOWAGIAC — Concerned citizens turned out at Monday's Dowagiac City Council meeting for a standing-room only evening at City Hall.

Worries about the possible expansion of a data center was the draw for the dozens in the room. Outside the chambers, Concerned Citizens of Dowagiac collected signatures requesting a six-month moratorium on such expansions and rallied with signs on the sidewalk prior to the meeting.

"The overwhelming response from our community highlights a clear message: the people of Dowagiac do not support this expansion without thorough understanding and consideration of its impacts," said representatives of the group while presenting the petition with 116 signatures to the Council during the meeting.

Several citizens spoke of their desire to add a vote on the topic to the agenda at the meeting, as well as their concerns about water use, pollution, health risks, and noise. Though the moratorium was not added, the Council did approve a request to the Planning Commission to review the city's zoning ordinance regarding noise standards for industrial zoned properties.

"I think it's a real solid document, and I think it addresses the very kinds of things the city council had heard from our last meeting and wanted to take forward," said City Manager Kevin Anderson of the resolution.

In July, Hyperscale Data Inc., a Las Vegas-based company, announced their interest in increasing the electric power capacity of its data center from its current 30 megawatts to 340 megawatts. The center has been located in the Business Center of Southwest Michigan at 415 E. Prairie Ronde for the past several years.

Anderson noted that the city had not received a permit for an application for the company to expand at the time of the meeting, but acknowledged the intent communicated in Hyperscale's press release. He also noted the existence of protective zoning ordinances and a current water ordinance that prohibits the existence of private wells, as well as the city's ability to remotely monitor water usage via meter systems. Anderson repeated that the property is a customer of AEP and is not a part of the city's electric system.

Ten citizens spoke during public comment regarding the matter. Though a single speaker indicated being open to the expansion, the

See **DATA CENTER**, page A6

Cassopolis holds its first 2026 village council meeting

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

CASSOPOLIS — The Cassopolis Village Council reviewed several invoice items and discussed scheduling changes at their regular monthly meeting on Monday.

Trustee Jeanne Makay raised questions about several invoiced items, including the cost of Christmas lights and staff attendance to conferences.

According to Village Manager Emilie LaGrow, the village lights and decorations tend to be more expensive than those used on homes due to the quantity needed and the wear and tear of the environment, particularly those near the water.

"They take a bit of a beating," said LaGrow.

Trustee Asali Kelly also shared the concerns and Trustee James Pedersen inquired about holiday lights still up around the village. According to staff, the village crews are still working on taking them down.

Though the conference expenses in question had been approved in a previous budget, Makay and Kelly expressed a desire to receive additional communication regarding particular expenses. President Pro-Tem Frank Williams Jr. expressed frustration with the questions, noting the previous approval for professional development.

Another expense in question were the utility bills at a village owned property. According to staff, the house is a rental owned by the village and the resident ultimately pays those utility expenses.

Makay requested more information be included with future reports regarding expenses over $100. According to LaGrow, report structure and staff time do not allow for such detail with each item, but trustees could email the village clerk regarding items of concern for more details.

Concerns about the meeting calendar were raised, noting the lack of a council workshop meeting in January. According to LaGrow, the 2026 calendar was created in collaboration with staff and President David Johnson and was adjusted based on concerns raised in 2025.

"Workshops are an as needed meeting," said LaGrow.

The Village will begin audit discussions in January or February, with drafts of the newest budget to be available in May in order to be approved in June.

The Council heard comments regarding a petition to change zoning allowing for livestock within the village. The language of the petition indicated the scope of the requested change as "To allow limited keeping of livestock on properties within the Village of Cassopolis while minimizing government involvement and protecting neighboring properties."

According to the presenters, the change would allow for small livestock on parcels between 2 and 5 acres and small and large livestock allowed on those greater than 5 acres. Swine remained prohibited in all instances requested. The language used was crafted

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Today's obituaries • Page A3-A4

Lillian Bennett
Lois Bowman
June Bozarth
June Culp
Terrace Dinehart-Zimmerman
Carol Engdahl
Ronald Espick
Marguerite Gorham
Robert Guettler
Charles Ishmael
Terry Johnson
Edward Mitchell
Robert Olgemuth
Barbara Parks
Jamie Southard
Thomas Tyler
Joyce Whalen
John Young

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Business	C4	Food	B7	Puzzles	B4
Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

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FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ The Fed needs to keep its distance from the Executive Branch of government. We cannot allow the President of the United States to pressure the Fed to lower interest rates by opening up a garbage criminal investigation into building construction on the Fed building.

■ I am appalled by the Minnesota shooting and our leaders condoning it just minutes after it happened. This was not the only solution.

■ We need to stop with the probationary discipline. Sorry, but we keep letting thieves go free and it almost always leads to more crime.

■ Parents, please make sure your kids have coats, gloves and hats on while walking to school or waiting for a ride. I see so many without proper clothing. The cold is dangerous.

■ Welcome back Saylor's Pizza! It was worth the wait.

■ Let the alumni pick the new Dowagiac football coach.

■ Thank you, Coach Davis for the time, energy and sacrifice you put into coaching the Dowagiac football team.

■ I find it interesting that the Facebook trolls complain about $6.50 per month to get the newspaper online, but have no problem with a monthly cable bill of $250, cell phone bill of $150 and a $600 car payment.

■ It would be nice if this administration could go just one day without sowing chaos. I think we all just need a break from domestic and international turmoil.

Local organizations set to host annual MLK Community Breakfast

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The NAACP Niles-Buchanan branch and the Mount Calvary Baptist Church are gearing up to host their annual breakfast celebrating the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Monday, Jan. 19.

The free event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, 601 Ferry St., Niles. Hosted on the civil rights leader's birthday, the event serves as an opportunity for the community to come together and honor Dr. King's work towards racial equality. The theme of this year's breakfast is "Unity in Diversity: Don't Give Up Hope." Pastor Lonell Hudson of the Greater New Jerusalem of South Bend is the event's keynote speaker.

The NAACP Niles chapter began in March 1942 and had been a voice for human equality by addressing local issues through advocacy and communication, as well as sought to educate members and the public on history and current concerns. The chapter was dissolved in 2018 due to low participation before being revived in 2024 as the Niles-Buchanan chapter.

Event organizers believe Dr. King's message is more important now than ever, and hope that the breakfast will inspire and encourage people to continue working towards a more equitable and just society.

File photo

The NAACP Niles-Buchanan branch and the Mount Calvary Baptist Church are gearing up to host their annual breakfast celebrating the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Monday, Jan. 19.

New SMC president to start in April

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

DOWAGIAC — Dr. Klint Pleasant, appointed as president on Dec. 29 by the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees, is on track to assume his new responsibilities in April 2026, subject to contract approval slated for February.

Dr. Pleasant said, "To say Rachel and I are excited would be an understatement. As I have studied the history of SMC and pored over information related to the Cass County region, I have been so impressed with the sense of community and pride. Our motto, 'Knowledge for All' – along with our commitment to provide accessible education in the region – are values that are worth upholding. Meeting the trustees, faculty, staff, administrators and community stakeholders was a highlight for me when visiting in December.

PLEASANT

"Interim President Brent Brewer, the leadership team and the trustees have done such an impressive job leading and shaping the institution over the past year, and I simply am looking forward to joining the community by listening, learning and doing my part to help continue to move SMC forward. I can't wait to become part of the community and get to work."

The Board of Trustees and Presidential Search Committee evaluated 128 applications received over a six-week period from an intensive national search that ended Aug. 17. Twelve semi-finalists were interviewed remotely in September and, from that group, four finalists were chosen for on-campus interviews in late 2025, with Dr. Pleasant emerging as the top candidate.

"Dr. Pleasant brings a wealth of experience to SMC in academics, enrollment management and strategy, fundraising and athletics, just to name a few," said Vice Chairman Tracy D. Hertsel, who is a retired educator and former superintendent.

"He is an extremely qualified administrator in the higher education arena," added Trustee Dr. Elaine Foster who has over 40 years of service in higher education. "He has spent time in the key operational areas of higher education, including academics. These experiences have provided him with the necessary skills to operate a complex organization like Southwestern Michigan College."

Dr. Pleasant, a lifetime Michigander, has worked in higher education for 28 years and has spent the last 20 years in administration. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from Lipscomb University, a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Tennessee and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Strategic Change from Lipscomb University.

Since 2017, he has served as the Senior Vice President and Special Assistant to the President at Rochester Christian University (RCU) in Rochester Hills, Mich. Since 2005, Pleasant has spent time managing enrollment, development and athletics. Additionally, he has been involved with strategic planning, student mentoring, student retention and community relations. Lastly, he has served as an instructor in the classroom and is a published author.

In addition to Pleasant's expertise in higher education administration, he has also been a highly successful college basketball coach, as he was recently inducted into the Michigan Basketball Hall of Fame. He is one of the top 25 winningest coaches in the NAIA and has captured numerous "Coach of the Year" awards while leading his teams to both conference and national championships.

Pleasant's teams have been known not only for their performance on the hardwood, but also in the classroom and in the community. Pleasant, along with his father and brother, manage the largest basketball camp in the state of Michigan which also is known for teaching life skills such as character and attitude.

He has also made coaching stops at Wayne State University, Abilene Christian University and Kent State University, where he helped lead the Golden Flashes to an NCAA I Elite Eight appearance. Pleasant is a sought-after speaker and has led numerous leadership retreats, along with speaking regularly at conferences.

Pleasant managed a transition at RCU, transforming the Athletic Department into an extension of the Enrollment Office. Under his leadership, the student-athlete population grew from 135 to 430, growing the athletic department from eight varsity sports to 23 and bringing critical net tuition revenue dollars to the institution. He also led the Enrollment Office (both student-athletes and non-student-athletes) to its highest headcount total in the 65-year history of the institution, while also maintaining a fundraising portfolio and securing multiple major gifts over the years.

He and his wife have a passion for the arts and appreciate the importance of performing and visual arts on SMC's campus.

Pleasant attended Abilene Christian University and played intercollegiate football before transferring to Lipscomb University to work with the basketball program. He was a 1st Team All-Conference football player at Waterford Kettering High School, in Waterford, Mich. He is married to Rachel, who earned a Master's in Exercise Physiology from Kent State University, and they have two daughters.

"Dr. Pleasant was our choice because of his administrative and strategic planning experience, proven fiscal responsibility, his successes at other institutions, his integrity and also the fact that he is a great communicator," said Chairman Thomas F. Jerdon. "He's basically done it all. Klint is a high-energy, community-minded professional and he fits nicely with what SMC needs in a CEO. He is well-connected within the higher-ed industry and across Michigan. His family is well known and greatly respected. He is the most experienced new hire for SMC president that I have witnessed during my 34 years on the board. I'm very excited for his arrival and the advances he'll make for SMC."

Dr. Pleasant will take the reins as SMC continues to thrive. Enrollment for Spring 2026 is projected to increase by 6.6 percent in contact hours – marking the sixth straight semester of positive numbers. Construction of a new wrestling facility, a performing arts upgrade to band and choir facilities and a Room to Grow capital campaign are underway, and in 2025, SMC again captured Leader Publications' Best of the Best in the College – Southwest Michigan category.

The college's eighth president, Dr. Joe Odenwald, announced his resignation in January 2025 and stepped down after Commencement ceremonies in May 2025 to become President of Alma College. Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Brent Brewer has served as Interim President since then.

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Established in 1886
www.leaderpub.com

Published Saturday except holidays when the postal service does not deliver mail: New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day at 25 N. Second St., Niles, Michigan, by Leader Publications LLC. Periodicals paid at the Niles Post Office, 741 Broadway St. Postmaster: Send change of address to Circulation Manager, The Daily Star, 25 N. Second St., Niles, MI 49120.
Home Delivery by mail is local: $7.50/month, out of town: $10.50/month.
USPS 390-620

OBITUARIES

Barbara Parks

June 8, 1946 – January 2, 2026

Barbara Ann Parks, age 79 years of Niles, Michigan; mother, grandmother, aunt, bingo fan, vocalist, and volunteer to veterans died peacefully Friday morning, Jan. 2, 2026, at Tanglewood Trace in Mishawaka, Indiana following an extended illness.

She was born on June 8, 1946, in Niles, to Robert L. and Helen A. (Collins) Stephens, and graduated from Niles High School with the class of 1964. She was employed at the former Niles plant of Simplicity Pattern Company for 32 years prior to retirement. She has lived in Niles all of her life.

Barb was a member and Past President of the American Legion Post 26 Auxiliary in Niles for over fifty years, where she also served as secretary and longtime treasurer. She was proud to be appointed as State Representative to the Battle Creek Veterans Administration Hospital, where she and her husband, Charlie volunteered, chairing many events including monthly parties.

For ten years, they provided a Christmas Gift Shop to provide every patient at the VA hospital with a Christmas gift. She was also a member by invitation of the Honor Society of Forty & Eight for leaders of the American Legion. When away from the VA hospital and Legion activities, Barb was a member of the Garden City Chorus, singing for many years at meetings of Niles area organizations and at nursing homes. She and Charlie enjoyed playing bingo and visiting area casinos. She was a Unit Bingo Chairman at the VA Hospital.

On retirement from Simplicity, Barb and Charlie took a five-week trip through the southern and western United States, trying-out new casinos along the way, stopping at Mount Rushmore – which was a great highlight, and even greater, visiting their newborn nephew, Jake DeLay.

On July 10, 1983 in Las Vegas, Nevada she married Charles Parks with whom she celebrated the 36th anniversary of their wedding, just two days prior to his death on July 12, 2019. She was also preceded in death by her parents, by a step-daughter, Tracey Lynn Krassow on May 14, 2024, and by Barb's brothers, Richard L. Shinholt in 2009, and Gary E. "Gary Edwards" Shinholt in 2011.

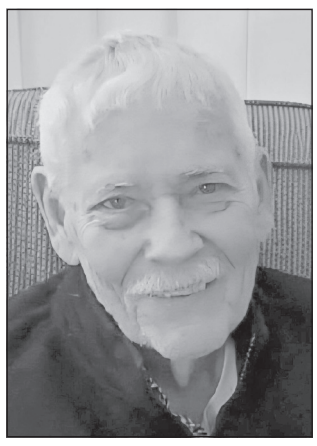
Surviving family includes her children, Kenneth Charles Truesdell, Jr., and Shellie (& Bobby) DeForest of Niles; step-children, Charles Thomas Parks of North Carolina, and the twins Mary Ann (& Dennis) Crouch of Niles, and Tammy Focht of Edwardsburg, Michigan; nine grandchildren and many great-grandchildren including Mason Calvin, and Penelope; and several nieces and nephews including a special niece, Toni (& Scott) Stansill of Graham, Texas.

Committal Services for Barbara Parks will be private, at a later date, at Fort Custer National Cemetery near Augusta, Michigan with Pastor Rae Williams of Niles officiating. Burial will be in the companion grave to her late husband, U.S. Navy Veteran Machinist Mate Charles Parks. These arrangements are being completed at the Halbritter-Wickens Funeral Home, 615 East Main Street in Niles. Memories and condolences may be shared online at: www.halbritterwickens.com. Contributions in memory of Barb may be made to the Battle Creek VA fund, care of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Michigan, 212 North Verlinden Avenue, Lansing, Michigan 48915; https://member.legion-aux.org/Home.

Barb loved people, and spent her life with others at places such as Simplicity Pattern where many women of Niles' northeast neighborhoods spent days folding and picking patterns; and at the VA hospital making hospital stays more pleasant, and leading the Auxiliary. Even playing bingo and going to the casino was more about the fellowship than the game, so much so that she continued to go after Charlie died, just to spend time with friends.

James Southard

January 16, 1938 – January 10, 2026



James Scott Southard, 87, of Vandalia, died peacefully, in the comfort of his family's presence. His life began Jan. 16, 1938, in Middletown, Ohio. The first of three born to Carroll Dean and Viola Jean Southard.

He married Arlene Kiner, March 16, 1991, in Middlebury. Jim served honorably in the U.S. Air Force. He was an electronic engineer and had his own company, Designco, and was a project manager for several international airports.

Jim and Arlene traveled the world together with Scott and Glenda Southard. Jim and Arlene attended Kessington Church. He loved music, playing the organ and guitar. Jim was a member of the Elkhart County North Camp of Gideons International. He also enjoyed drawing, especially with his grandchildren.

Jim built the family home himself and could often be found cutting wood for their wood burning stove. He had many friends and didn't know a stranger. Most of all Jim loved spending time with his family.

Jim will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his wife of thirty-four years, Arlene Southard of Vandalia; five daughters, Robin (Doug) VanZile of Vandalia, Beth Iavagnilio of Elkhart, Kristin (Larry) Christopulos of Bristol, Karla (John Schirripa) Kiner of Dowagiac, Karen (Doug) Anderson of Niles; one son, Scott (Glenda) Southard of Colorado Springs, Colorado; 12 grandchildren; 23 great grandchildren; seven great-great grandchildren; one brother, David (Kris) Southard of Terre Haute, Indiana and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Ruth Marilyn Work. Family and friends will gather Saturday, January 17, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. until time of service at 12:00 Noon in Chapel Hill Missionary Church, 14525 Chapel Hill Street (corner of Baldwin Prairie Road), Jones, Michigan.

Jim will be laid to rest in Plum Grove Cemetery in Union, Michigan. The family prefers contributions in memory of Jim be made to Alzheimer's and Dementia Services of Northern Indiana, 111 Sunnybrook Court, South Bend.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online at wagnercares.com.

Thomas Tyler

January 31, 1933 – January 8, 2026

Thomas Tyler, 92, of Granger, Indiana, died peacefully on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026, in the comfort of his family's presence. He was cherished not only for his remarkable achievements, but mostly for the warmth, wisdom, and generosity he shared with family, friends, and his community.

His life began Jan. 31, 1933 in Illinois, the second of three sons born to Robert and Dorotha (Taylor) Tyler. His early years were spent in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, before moving to Niles, Michigan where he attended high school. Tom met the love of his life, Kaye, at a baseball game in the summer of 1950. They married in April 1952 and lived in Hanover, New Hampshire where he attended Dartmouth College. While majoring in engineering and running track, he became father to Terry and Steve. He graduated from Dartmouth and Thayer School of Engineering, where he also taught thermodynamics.

He served in the Army for a short time before returning to Niles to join the family business, Tyler Refrigeration. A highlight was living in Lucerne, Switzerland for three years in the mid-1960's where he grew the company across Europe. Tom and Kaye welcomed Jenny to the family after moving back to Niles. Tragically, Steve died at age sixteen, from leukemia. Tom transitioned to Clark Equipment Company in Buchanan and led their international division. He was responsible for developing business across Mexico and South America, and traveled extensively.

After a stint with Wheelabrator Frye in New Hampshire, Tom and family moved to Huntington, Indiana where he served and ultimately retired as president of Shuttleworth Inc. Following retirement, Tom and Kaye moved to Granger, Indiana. They purchased a home in Venice, Florida – mostly so Kaye would have a warm place to stay in the winter while Tom enjoyed multiple annual ski trips with buddies from Niles and Dartmouth.

When Kaye passed in 2018, they had been married for sixty-five years. Tom missed her dearly every day and surrounded himself with things that reminded him of her in their home where he remained until his own passing.

Tom had a lifelong enthusiasm for sports. He was a member of the Niles High School 1950 State Championship Track Team and was an individual State Champion in the 880 (yard) event. He rooted for Terry in track and cross-country in high school and college. And he forever rooted for the Fighting Irish. He loved sailing and started with Sunfish and then raced C-Scows and MC's on Indian Lake. Along with friends from Huntington, Indiana, he and Kaye co-owned a 30' sailboat on Lake Wawasee that they dubbed "Why Not." He was a passionate snow skier and took annual ski trips with his buddies well into his eighties. Big Sky, Montana, was his favorite spot in the Rockies. He taught Terry and Steve to ski in Switzerland; he taught Jenny to ski at Boyne Mountain.

Dartmouth College was a special place to Tom. He was proud that his brothers, his children, a nephew, and a granddaughter all attended Dartmouth. He served in many ways after he left Hanover (executive committee for class of 1954, alumni council, and prospective student interviewer). He remained a generous contributor to the college and Thayer School to the end.

International travel for business and pleasure was consistent throughout Tom's life. The Pan-Am world map cork board is covered with little red pins. He traveled to too-many-to-count countries. Japan topped the list in terms of frequency and his expertise. Tom and Kaye enjoyed many cruises internationally post-retirement including South America and Antarctica, southeast Asia, Russia and Africa. A highlight was a cruise along the Alaskan coastline in 1996 with the entire family.

Community service was a priority for Tom. He served in leadership capacities for many organizations including the American Management Association, as Trustee of Huntington University, the Huntington Chamber of Commerce and multiple church committees. Continuing a legacy established by his grandparents, Tom extolled the importance of education, which he generously supported with his expertise, leadership and financial contributions.

In his final few years, Tom found a welcoming home at the First Presbyterian Church of Buchanan. He joined the Niles Optimist Club. His "pod" over the last few years meant a great deal to him. The weekly routine including breakfasts, dinners, church and "brunch" at Ho Ping kept him going. He most enjoyed simple pleasures like smoking his pipe or sitting on the porch at the cottage on Indian Lake every Saturday evening in the summertime.

Tom's legacy will be as an exemplary husband and father; a role model and mentor to many; and a generous community servant. He has left a lasting influence on the Tyler Family and all those who had the pleasure of knowing him. Tom will be greatly missed by family and friends.

He is survived by his son Terence Tyler, (Gisele) Shelton, Connecticut; daughter Jennifer Tyler, (Lee Allard) Grand Rapids, Michigan; grandchildren Kathleen Walania (Eric), Christine Dansereau (Scott), Devon Tyler, Lauren Allard, Stephen Tyler (Emily), and Lindsey Allard; great grandchildren Christian Walania, Claire Walania, Edward Dansereau, and Juliet Dansereau; and a host of nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his wife Kathryn; brothers Bob Jr. and Tim Tyler; and son Stephen. Family and friends will gather in Niles to celebrate Tom's life at a to-be-determined date in May or June. He will be laid to rest in Silverbrook Cemetery next to his beloved Kaye.

The family prefers memorial donations in Tom's name be directed to the Niles-Buchanan YMCA Youth Scholarship Fund, 905 N Front Street, Niles, Michigan 49120. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Terrace Dinehart-Zimmerman

Terrace Dinehart-Zimmerman, 79, of Niles passed away on Jan. 6, 2026. Visitation at Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services on Wednesday, Jan. 14, from 4-6 p.m. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Ronald Espick

Ronald Leroy Espick, 87, passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2026, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Robert Wolgemuth

February 28, 1948 – January 10, 2026

Robert David Wolgemuth, age 77, left his earthly body and entered into the presence of Christ on January 10, 2026, following a brief but intense battle with complications from pneumonia. Born February 28, 1948, in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, to Samuel and Grace Wolgemuth, Robert grew up in a vibrant Christian home and came to faith at his mother's knee as a young child.

After graduating from Wheaton Central High School (Wheaton, Illinois) in 1965, he attended Taylor University (Upland, Indiana), where he graduated in 1969 with a degree in Biblical Literature and later received an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters. Robert met and fell in love with Barbara ("Bobbie") Gardner when he was a college student and they married in March of 1970. Two precious daughters followed: Melissa ("Missy") in 1971 and Julie in 1974 – planting the seeds for Robert's first book, She Calls Me Daddy.

After 44 years of marriage and a 30-month battle with cancer – and with Robert by her side – Bobbie went Home to Jesus on October 28, 2014. Robert often said of Bobbie: "The way she handled her own imminent death removed from my heart any fear of dying. She showed us how to do this with grace."

Although he worked his way through college as a contractor and maintained a lifelong love of building projects, Robert spent his career in the publishing industry. Journalist Warren Smith said, "Robert Wolgemuth has been one of the most influential evangelicals you've never heard of … He was the president of Thomas Nelson Publishers, one of the oldest, and most successful Christian book publishers in the world. In 1992, he became a literary agent, representing some of the most successful evangelical writers in the country."

Robert also held significant positions at Campus Life magazine, Word Publishing, and as co-founder with Michael Hyatt of Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers. He authored or coauthored some twenty-five books, several of which received Silver Medallion Awards. He served as Chairman of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association and founded his own literary agency, Wolgemuth & Associates.

As a literary agent, Robert represented author Nancy Leigh DeMoss for a few years, during which time he and Bobbie became dear friends of Nancy. Unbeknownst to Robert, as Bobbie neared death, she told a couple of close friends that she hoped Robert would marry Nancy after she was gone. Some time following Bobbie's Home-going, Robert initiated a relationship with Nancy who, to that point, had joyfully served the Lord as a single woman. The Lord opened Nancy's heart to receive Robert's kindness and love and the couple was married on November 14, 2015, in Wheaton, Illinois.

In his final book, Finish Line, Robert wrote about finishing life well – with preparation, peace, and purpose. He challenged his readers to live fully for Christ all the way to the end, all the way to "the dazzling splendor of Jesus. A blinding sparkle. A brilliant finish, to be sure. What an amazing goal for you and me. To finish well ... with a beautiful, burnished, God-honoring finish."

Robert lived what he preached, investing his last years on earth to the full: serving tirelessly alongside Nancy at Revive Our Hearts, writing, teaching, praying, mentoring younger men, caring for his neighbors, enjoying his family, and loving Jesus, Nancy, and others in a way that was infectious. Robert joins his late wife, Bobbie, in Christ's presence.

He leaves behind his wife, Nancy; two daughters and sons-in law: Missy (Jon) Schrader and Julie (Christopher) Tassy; five grandchildren and two sons-in-law: Abby (Ben) Quirin, Luke, Isaac, Harper (Durham) Martin, Ella; and four great-grandchildren: Ezra, Ruby, Frances, and (soon to be born) Penelope. He also leaves behind a loving, extended family (including five close siblings and their mates and children) and an army of friends who treasure his love and life.

Robert's friends and family will remember him as a faithful man of God, devoted husband, loving father and grandfather, wise servant-leader, relentless encourager, and spiritual role model. His absence is sorely felt, but even now in death, his life continues to point to his one great Hope: everlasting life with his Savior in the new heavens and the new earth, surrounded by God's people forever. And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee.

Isaiah 35:10 "Crossing the finish line is going to be a celebration like you cannot imagine. Even better. It's Christmas morning when you were a kid. It's your honeymoon. It's the birth of your first child. Or grandchild. Or great-grandchild. It's your favorite team winning the championship. The word is way overused, but this time it fits: one day your finish line is going to be awesome." – Robert Wolgemuth (Finish Line)

A service for friends and family to honor Robert will be held on Friday, Jan. 23, at Community Baptist Church, 5715 Miami Rd, South Bend. (All times are Eastern Time.) 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Nancy and family will receive guests 2:00-4:00 Main service: Worship and lament; gratitude for Robert's life 4-5:30 p.m. Light dinner and fellowship 5:30-7 p.m. Singing hymns and sharing memories For those who are unable to attend in person, both portions of the service will be available via livestream at Revive OurHearts.com/Robert.

A private committal service will be held on Saturday morning, January 24. Please consider leaving a note of encouragement for Nancy or a tribute to Robert at https://www.reviveourhearts.com/about/robert-wolgemuth/#tribute. In lieu of flowers, a gift to Revive Our Hearts in Robert's memory at https://www.reviveourhearts.com/donate/robert-wolgemuth/ will honor his heart for the mission and message of this ministry he dearly loved and where he served hand-in-hand with Nancy for the final decade of his life.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to our Ministry Services team at Ministry services@reviveourhearts.com or 800-569-5959.

Terry Johnson

Terry Joe Johnson, 57, passed away on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026, in South Bend, Indiana. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

See more obituaries on page A4

OBITUARIES

Carol Engdahl

January 17, 1932 – January 12, 2026

Carol Ann Engdahl, 93, of Niles, died Jan. 12, 2026, in her home. Her life began Jan. 17, 1932, in Niles, Michigan, the third of nine born to Lewis and Bessie Webber. Carol graduated in 1950 from Dowagiac High School.

She married the love of her life, Ernest "Bud" Engdahl, Nov. 29, 1952. After getting married, she worked for Simplicity Patterns for several years. Carol and Bud enjoyed traveling, motorcycling and snowmobiling together. She was a member of the Pokagon Fire Department Auxiliary.

Carol was also active in the Cass County Council on Aging and was a member of the Red Hat Society. Carol loved being outdoors, gardening, spending time by the pool and hosting guests at her home. She could often be found crafting, sewing, knitting and crocheting. Most of all, she enjoyed being with her family.

Carol will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by one daughter, Debra (David) Dill of Buchanan; two sons, Danny Engdahl of Niles, Denny (Judy) Engdahl of Niles; three grandchildren, Michael (Sara) Dill of Mishawaka, Lori Engdahl of Niles, Teri (Andrew) Mortek of Oceola; ten great grandchildren; four great-great grandchildren; three sisters, Beverly Engdahl of Niles, Betty Conley of South Bend, Ruth (Jim) Andrus of Lansing; sister-in-law, Jo Engdahl of Texas and a host of nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her loving husband, Ernest "Bud" Engdahl of fifty-eight years; grandson, Denny Engdahl Jr.; great-great grandson, Syles; sisters, Mary Melton, Fran Pryne; brothers, Kenny McLaughlin, Bill Webber, Bobby Webber; two daughters-in-law, Sharon Engdahl and Martha Engdahl.

Family and friends will gather in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, 615 East Main Street, Niles. Friday, Jan. 16 from 10 a.m. until the time of her service at 12 noon. Carol will be laid to rest in Mission Hills Memorial Gardens.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Carol be made to Cass County Council on Aging, 60525 Decatur Rd, Cassopolis, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Joyce Whalen

January 4, 1932 – January 10, 2026

Joyce Louise Whalen, 94, of Bradenton, Florida, died Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026. Her life began Jan. 4, 1932, in Richmond, Indiana the second of four children born to Frank and Christine Lang. She married Donald Whalen on May 17, 1952, in Richmond, Indiana. After forty-four years of marriage, he preceded her in death in April of 1997.

Throughout her life, Joyce worked for Gerber as a seamstress. She decorated cakes and enjoyed doing crafts. When she and Donald moved to Florida. They enjoyed working together at various jobs. Joyce will be greatly missed by family and friends.

She is survived by daughters, Cynthia (Steve) Wolfe of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Darlene (Bryan) Stethem of South Bend, Indiana; son, Donald P. (Laura) Whalen of Parrish, Florida; seven grandchildren, Traci (Randy) Akers, Barry (Heather) Kole, Danny (Darcy) Hoffman, Stephanie (Brandon) Morrell, Justin (Shannon) Whalen, Sarah (Mike) Parnell, Patrick Wolfe; seven great grandchildren, Brandon (Adelle) Kole, Brandy (Connor) Clarke, Kim (Nolan) Gray, Caitlyn Akers, Hannah Kole, Brooklyn Morrell, Sydney Morrell; and a host of nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved husband; and her siblings. Family and friends will gather Saturday, Jan. 17 from 11 a.m. until time of service at 12 noon in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, 615 East Main Street, Niles. Joyce will be laid to rest beside her husband in Silverbrook Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Joyce be made to Inspired Living, 5424 Lena Road, Bradenton, Florida 34211. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles.

Please share a memory or a message online: halbritter wickens.com.

Edward Mitchell

Edward Raymond Mitchell, 60, passed away on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Lois Bowman

Lois Bowman, 98, of Niles passed away Jan. 10, 2026. Private funeral services were held at Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services in Niles.

Lillian Bennett

Lillian Bennett, 82, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Jan. 10, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Robert 'Bob' Guettler

Robert "Bob" Guettler, 91, of Berrien Springs passed away Jan. 8, 2026. Funeral services will be Jan. 15 at Berrien Springs Methodist Church at 11 a.m., with visitation beginning at 10 a.m. Arrangements by Allred Funeral Home, Berrien Springs.

Marguerite Gorham

Marguerite A. Gorham, 96, formerly of Dowagiac, passed away Friday morning, Jan. 9, 2026, in Paw Paw, Michigan. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, 405 Center Street, Dowagiac. 269-782-2135.

June Culp

June Emma Culp, 84, passed away on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

June Bozarth

June Bozarth, 83, passed away Jan. 7, 2026. Funeral service New Hope Apostolic Church in Battle Creek on Friday, Jan. 16 at Noon, visitation at 11 a.m. Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles.

John Young

John E. Young Sr, 83, of Dowagiac, passed away early Tuesday morning, Jan. 13, 2026, in Dowagiac. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac. 269-782-2135.

Charles Ishmael

Charles Edward Ishmael, 93, passed away on Friday January 9, 2026, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

OBITUARY POLICY

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $15. Extended obituaries are priced based on character count. For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

See more obituaries on page A3

Three injured in two-vehicle Jefferson Township crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP — Three people were hospitalized following a two-vehicle crash Friday night in Jefferson Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 6:30 p.m. Friday, deputies responded to reports of a crash located at the intersection of Daily Road and M-60 in Jefferson Township. The investigation showed that Dawn Sparks, 65, of Cassopolis, was traveling west-bound on M-60 in her Toyota Highlander, when she was struck in the passenger side of her vehicle by Yolanda Hernandez, 53, of Elkhart, Ind., who had stopped at the stop sign at Daily Road and M-60, then pulled out in her Jeep Renegade, failing to yield the right of way and striking Sparks' vehicle.

Sparks' vehicle left the roadway due to the impact of the collision and struck a house located near the intersection.

Sparks and her front seat passenger, Carl Sparks, 66, of Cassopolis, and a 13-year old juvenile of Cassopolis, who was riding in the back seat, were all transported to the hospital for treatment of the injuries that were sustained during the crash. The four people located in Hernandezes vehicle sustained no apparent injuries. The Cass County Sheriff's Office was assisted by SMCAS Ambulance service and Central Cass Fire Department. The case remains under investigation.

2 people are injured in Milton Township crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

MILTON TOWNSHIP — Two people were injured Sunday in a single vehicle crash in Milton Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 11:22 a.m., county deputies responded to a single vehicle crash on Brush Road south of Redfield Street in Milton Township.

The investigation showed that a vehicle driven by Rochelle Lanae Tennant, 46, of Elkhart, Ind., was southbound on Brush Road when she lost control of her vehicle on the icy roads, leaving the roadway and landing in a ditch. Two juvenile occupants of the vehicle went by SMCAS Ambulance to Corewell Niles Hospital for evaluation of non-life threatening injuries sustained in the traffic crash.

Assisting agencies on scene were SMCAS EMS and Edwardsburg Fire Department.

The crash remains under investigation.

Woman hospitalized in LaGrange Twp. crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

LAGRANGE TOWNSHIP — A Cassopolis woman airlifted to the hospital after a fiery crash Monday in LaGrange Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 4:17 p.m., deputies were dispatched to a single vehicle crash at the intersection of Beeson Street and M-62 in LaGrange Township.

Investigation showed that Shawna Karnes, 39, of Cassopolis, was traveling East bound on Beeson Street, when her vehicle went off the south side of the roadway, striking some trees. Karnes vehicle then ricocheted to the other side of the road and rolled into a field, catching on fire. Karnes was extricated from the vehicle and transported by MED Flight to South Bend Memorial Hospital for her injuries.

Assisting agencies in this crash were Cass FD, SMCAS and MED Flight. The crash remains under investigation.

FBI offers reward in connection with damage, theft from government vehicles in Minneapolis

By PAUL WALSH
Star Tribune (TNS)

The White House is expressing anger while the FBI is putting up a reward in hopes of tracking down whoever damaged agents' vehicles and stole government documents during unrest that followed a federal officer shooting and wounding a man on Jan. 14 in north Minneapolis.

FBI Director Kash Patel announced on Jan. 15 that his agency is offering a reward of up to $100,000 for information related to last night's vandalism and theft of government property in Minneapolis.

Patel pledged in the posting that "if you harm law enforcement or destroy/steal federal property this @FBI will not hesitate to pursue you, find you, and bring you to the fullest extent of justice."

The director's announcement included a poster that showed two agents' vehicles vandalized and tagged with profane graffiti.

The poster said the FBI is seeking information "leading to the recovery of the stolen government property and/or the arrest of the individuals responsible for the destruction and theft of government property."

The FBI said tips can be submitted by calling 800-225-5324 or online at tips.fbi.gov.

Videos recorded from the scene showed protesters gathering documents and other possessions they said belonged to federal agents.

One video making the rounds under the watermark "Status Coup" showed a woman holding what she said were papers from one agent's vandalized, abandoned vehicle "with FBI operational info. It's got full names of FBI agents, phone numbers, emails. There's maps on where they're staying, where they're holding immigrants. There's hotel names in there. There's judge names."

She went on to say the papers included instructions on "operational posture," explaining to agents how they're supposed to stand and how to handle protesters.

During the White House's daily briefing, press secretary Karoline Leavitt showed photos of the damaged vehicles and said, "If you look at the images out of Minneapolis last night, look at this vehicle. Look at what is says. It says F ICE.

"You have these individuals who are putting their middle finger (up) proudly ... at the camera. Another ICE vehicle was vandalized last night by these left-wing agitators. People don't do this without encouragement from people in power who make them feel like it's OK.

WEEKEND WEATHER

Saturday: A 30 percent chance of snow showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 22. West wind 10 to 15 mph.

Saturday Night: Snow showers likely. Cloudy, with a low around 10. Southwest wind around 10 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

Sunday: A 40 percent chance of snow showers. Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 20. Southwest wind 10 to 15 mph.

Sunday Night: Snow showers likely. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 6. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. New snow accumulation of 1 to 2 inches possible.

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June 17 – Run For Your Wife

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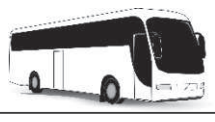

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Area residents sentenced in Cass County

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

CASSOPOLIS — Four area residents were sentenced for resisting police and other charges Friday in sentencings in Cass County Circuit Court at the Cass County Law & Courts Building.

Shantell Rashawn Grant, 31, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted resisting and obstructing police and attempted second degree home invasion and was sentenced to two years probation, completion of the Twin County Probation program, credit for 195 days served and $2,336 in fines and costs.

GRANT

The incident occurred May 21, 2025 in Cassopolis. Grant took items including marijuana and a backpack from a residence and then was arrested at another location. Once arrested, he kicked at the windows of the police car and threatened to kill police officers.

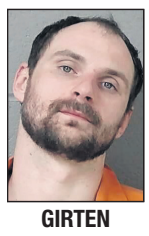
Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz noted that these were Grant's 12th and 13th criminal convictions and first felonies.

Defense attorney Nicholas Hogue noted that Grant has a drug problem and that he needs treatment. "He knows the way he was acting and speaking that night was not appropriate," Hogue said. "But the key question is why he's acting this way … He knows if he fails to comply, he's going to prison."

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman concurred with Hogue. "It's not about fooling me, it's about you," he said. "If you cut corners, you'll be the one ending up back in court. You could go to prison for up to two years if you violate your probation."

Grant also has a pending theft charge in Indiana that he must resolve.

Michael Dominique Girten, 29, of Union, Mich., pleaded guilty to resisting and obstructing police as a habitual offender and was sentenced to three years probation in the Adult Treatment Court, credit for two days served, completion of the Twin County Probation program and $2,628 in fines and costs.

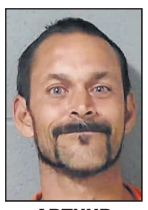

GIRTEN

The incident occurred June 30, 2025 in Porter Township. Police observed him operating a car without a license plate. Girten backed his car into a space at a gas station and then left on foot. He was then tracked him down outside a nearby house.

Judge Herman noted that Girten also faces charges in St. Joseph County, Michigan for meth possession and LaGrange County, Indiana for theft. "You're starting to dig quite a hole for yourself and it's all drug related," he said. "Drugs never do you any good, I've never seen anyone succeed if they're on drugs."

"Right now, your life is headed down hill," he added. "If you violate your probation you will be sentenced in three courts in two different states … From my perspective, this is the end. Either you will be serious about making changes or it will definitely be prison if you come back here."

Randy Ray Arthur, 42, of Van Buren County, pleaded guilty to fourth degree fleeing police, domestic violence and attempted resisting and attempted obstructing police and was sentenced to two years probation and 90 days in jail with credit for two days served. He must complete anger management programs.


ARTHUR

That incident occurred June 24, 2025 in Marcellus.

He also pleaded guilty to drunk driving and attempted resisting police from a Sept. 19, 2025 incident near Dowagiac and was sentenced to credit for 113 days served. He must pay a total of $3,683 in fines and costs for both cases.

Judge Herman noted that Arthur has a total of 16 convictions including the ones he was sentenced for Friday. "The convictions go back 20 years, you're no stranger to the system," he said. "It's not your first arrests battering women or fleeing police. You have pending assault and drunk driving charges in Van Buren County."

Jacob Luthringer, 34, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to fourth degree fleeing police and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 33 days served and $2,268 in fines and costs.

LUTHRINGER

The incident occurred June 9, 2025 in Dowagiac when he failed to stop when police tried to pull him over.

He also was sentenced for violating his probation from a 2023 larceny conviction and was sentenced to credit for four days served and additional 12 months probation concurrent with the probation in the new file.

Luthringer was ordered to take care of an Elkhart County warrant as part of his probation.

The sad tale of the Great Chili Tragedy of 2025

By DANIEL NEMAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (TNS)

In my head, I knew exactly how the office chili potluck would go.

At the end of the meal, an ad hoc committee of my colleagues would approach me and say, "Gosh, Mr. Newman, this is the best chili we have ever had. And although we had not previously been planning to hand out a prize at this admittedly informal gathering, we have decided to award you this fine trophy. In solid gold. And a crown."

But I put all my eggs in one basket, and I counted them before they hatched.

I had made too much chili to place it in a sealable Tupperwaresque plastic tub, so I just put it in my Crock-Pot and drove to work. I don't live that far away. What could possibly go wrong?

And nothing did go wrong, for perhaps the first half-mile. I drove with the Crock-Pot on the passenger-side floor, and my hand on its lid.

"I'm crushing this," I thought.

I stopped carefully at a stop sign. A pickup truck on the cross street stopped slightly after I did. I started to go through the intersection, and so did he. I hit the brake, while simultaneously indicating with my hand that he should proceed. Which is to say I took my hand off the Crock-Pot at the same time I was putting on the brakes.

Chili flew all over the floor.

Incidentally, the guy in the truck also stopped and indicated with his hand that I should go ahead. He seemed nice.

The worst part of the Great Chili Tragedy of 2025 was my wife. Just before I left the house, she literally said, "You should put it in a bag in case it spills." And I literally said, "It's not going to spill."

The moment those words left my lips, I was doomed. And I knew I was doomed, too. But I'm nothing if not stubborn. And stupid. So I set out on my half-mile date with destiny.

Cleaning the car was not pleasant, especially because I was awash in self-loathing the way a car's floor mat can very easily be awash in chili. My wife came out to help me clean it – I drove it home to clean – and to her credit she said admirably little about my stubbornness and stupidity.

The worst part of the Great Chili Tragedy of 2025 was my wife. Just before I left the house, she literally said, "You should put it in a bag in case it spills." And I literally said, "It's not going to spill." The moment those words left my lips, I was doomed.

But she has enough I-Told-You-So points to last at least five years.

We got rid of all the chili, and I threw out the soaked floormat. All that remains now is a faint and pleasant aroma of chili, and I expect it to dissipate in a day or two.

Around a cup and a half of chili was left unspilled in the Crock-Pot. I put it in a sealable Tupperwaresque plastic tub, placed that tub in a bag (I mean, who wouldn't put a container of chili in a bag before attempting to transport it?) and brought along a small serving bowl. When safely at the office, I placed these next to the array of large slow cookers full of chili.

My colleagues were unexpectedly and uncharacteristically sympathetic at my plight, and more than one mentioned an episode of "The Office" in which essentially the same thing happened to the oafish Kevin. Many even sampled little tiny bits of my chili, since there was not much to go around.

But I did not receive a solid gold trophy, or even a crown. And – I'm being serious here – it may well have been the best batch of chili I have ever made. Just the right amount of spice (quite a bit) cooked for just the right amount of time (quite a while).

Lately, I have unaccountably been thinking about John Greenleaf Whittier, the justifiably forgotten 19th century American poet whose cloying verse was once popular. When he is considered at all these days, it is for a single line toward the end of his emotion-choked ode "Maud Muller."

I find it appropriate for an exemplary batch of chili, spilled before it could be served and enjoyed.

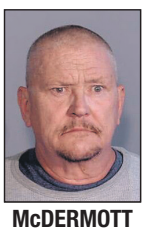
"For of all sad words of tongue or pen,/The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'"

Niles man gets jail time for racially motivated graffiti incident

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES – The Niles man who painted a racial slur on a downtown Niles business was sentenced to jail and probation Monday in Berrien County Trial Court sentencings at the Niles Courthouse.

Timothy William McDermott, 63, of Niles, pleaded guilty to an attempted hate crime and was sentenced to 60 days in jail with credit for two days served, two years probation, 200 hours of community service, completion of a racial sensitivity program and $678 in fines and costs.


McDERMOTT

The incident occurred Aug. 14 in Niles outside the In The Cut Barbershop. Shop owner Eric Williams found the racist graffiti on the side wall of his shop.

Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch said she agreed with the recommendation for jail and probation. "I agree that there should be a period of incarceration and probation given the magnitude and nature of the offense," she said. "It could have created a more serious situation."

Defense attorney Robert Reilman said his client now understands that his actions were not how he should communicate with others and how his actions were perceived by the victim and others. "It was not his intent to show racial animosity with the use of that term," he said. "He has offered to paint over what he wrote at his own expense. He is remorseful."

Monday, McDermott apologized directly to Williams who attended the sentencing but did not speak. "Sir, I give you my heartfelt apology for my stupidity," he said. "I'd like to make it up to you … As crazy as it sounds, it was not directed toward you."

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein called McDermott's actions "a serious offense." "Hatred is a virus and an infectious disease spewed in the community," he said. "This was more than stupidity, it was intentional. You say you didn't have any intent but I don't know any other way to construe what you wrote."

"We're trying to get past this in society and what you did put us back," the judge added. "The victim has come out and said he has forgiven you and doesn't want you punished to the fullest extent of the law, but actions have consequences and there has to be a message sent."

Also Monday, four other area residents were sentenced on drug, assault and weapons charges.

Debra Danee Jones, 46, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to two years probation, 30 days in jail with credit for two days served and $598 in fines and costs.

The jail term was postponed to the end of her probation and could be suspended if she is successful on probation.

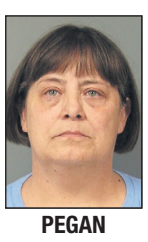
JONES

The incident occurred Nov. 29, 2025 in Niles.

Judge Hosbein told Jones that she needs to continue her mental health counseling. "It's not a process, it's not something you can stop and start as you please," he said. "The tools you gain you have to practice the rest of your life."

Michell Renee Pegan, 53, of Niles, pleaded guilty to delivery/manufacture of cocaine and was sentenced to two years probation, 30 days in jail with credit for two days served and $658 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred May 20, 2025 in Niles Township. She was found with over 45 grams of cocaine.


PEGAN

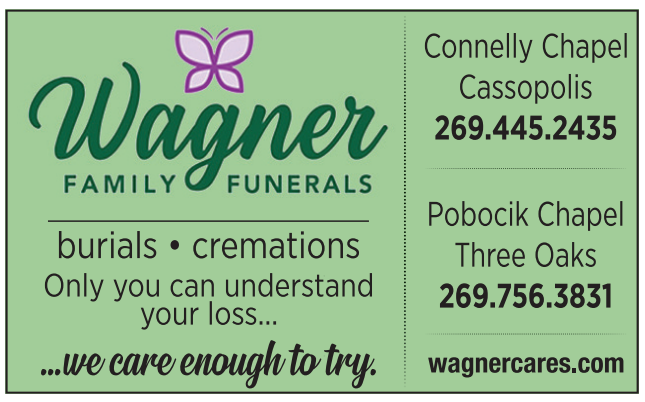
Defense attorney Amy MacDowell said that Pegan has been getting counseling. For her part, Pegan blamed her actions on "sheer stupidity". "There's no excuse for it," she said. "I want to get back on the right track in my life."

William Andrew Wallace, 22, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to carrying a concealed weapon and was sentenced to 12 months probation under the Holmes Youthful Training Act, credit for four days served, forfeiture of the weapon and $598 in fines and costs. The charge won't be on his record if he is successful on probation.

The incident occurred Jan. 11, 2025 on U.S. 12 in Niles Township.

Dakota Willard-Bontrager, 20, of Niles, pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine less than 25 grams and was sentenced to 18 months probation, credit for one day served and $1,598 in fines and costs. The charge will be kept off his record if he successful on probation.

The incident occurred Nov. 16, 2025 in Niles.



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Dowagiac mayor launches video address series

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Photo provided

The City of Dowagiac released Thursday its first in what will be a series of video addresses from Mayor Patrick M. Bakeman.

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac's new mayor is expanding his means of communication.

The City of Dowagiac released Thursday its first in what will be a series of video addresses from Mayor Patrick M. Bakeman. The video, shot at Venue 132 in downtown Dowagiac, allowed residents to hear directly from Bakeman regarding a variety of topics including financial standing and city leadership, transparency initiatives, quality of life highlights and more. The video can be found on the city's "Dowagiac Michigan" Facebook page as well as the city's website.

Regarding energy programs and utility services, Bakeman said both residential and business customers of the city have an opportunity to receive rebates and cash incentives for being energy efficient.

"Our Energy Smart program gives you cash back when you buy appliances or make energy-efficient upgrades to your home," he said.

Bakeman added that the city offers a budget plan for utility bills.

"Instead of paying high usage during peak months, the budget plan allows you to pay your monthly average every month for the year," he said. "This is a service I use and appreciate very much."

More information on these services can be found at cityofdowagiac.com [option 2 at this link] or by calling City Hall at (269) 782-2195.

Members of the city council, as well as the city's public works, public safety, utility staff and community members were recognized for their work.

"Your dedication and engagement are the foundation of everything we accomplish," he said.

Bakeman also touched on the city's financial standing, which he said remains strong.

"Our most recent audit confirmed that the City of Dowagiac remains in strong financial standing, which allows us to continue investing in critical services and infrastructure while staying fiscally responsible," he said.

Transparency remains a top priority Bakeman and the city council. City council meetings will soon be streamed, and a microphone system will be installed to improve communication and accessibility. In addition, council packets – with agendas and minutes – will be released on Wednesdays going forward, giving the public access two business days earlier.

Bakeman also highlighted city improvements and additions from 2025, including a new ADA-accessible walking path at Russom Park made possible with marijuana tax revenue and a $5,000 contribution from the Dowagiac Youth Baseball and Softball Association, the expansion of healthcare options in the community and the 50th anniversary of the Dowagiac DART ride-share service in the community.

"The City's team is always on the lookout for grant opportunities and ways to help residents and businesses tap into them to help make our community a better place," Bakeman said.

As far as 2026, Bakeman highlighted upcoming city projects and developments:

Construction will begin on a new water treatment plant to replace the city's current 50-year-old facility.

The city will continue the ongoing replacement of lead service lines.

Infrastructure for water and sewer will be expanded in partnership with the Pokagon Band.

The Wounded Minnow redevelopment project is set to bring new housing options to Dowagiac.

The city is working with a local property owner to bring a new Elite Aesthetics location to the downtown area.

Hurrle Storage was recently welcomed into the city's industrial park.

2026 will see the completion of a major reconstruction on Prairie Ronde and the start of the South Front Street Park and Streetscape projects.

The city anticipates helping to secure an additional $400,000 in grants for home renovations to support local homeowners and neighborhoods.

Bakeman closed the address encouraging community members to look out for each other and to shop local.

"Dowagiac is moving forward with purpose," he said. "We're maintaining financial stability, improving infrastructure, expanding services, looking for business opportunities, and increasing transparency – all while working together as a community.

Let's all help keep Dowagiac looking good by keeping our yards clean, and let's keep looking out for each other any way that we can. It matters.

"Thank you for your time, your trust, and your continued involvement. The progress we're making belongs to all of us. The best days for Dowagiac are still ahead."

SpaceX hires Southwestern Michigan College welding graduate

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

Scout Hunsberger.

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac's Scout Hunsberger, a 2024 Southwestern Michigan College welding technology graduate, reached for the stars in her job search and is destined for Mars.

Hunsberger, 21, beat out seven male contenders for a SpaceX position, TIG welder for the Starship heat shield.

The 2022 Union High School graduate starts Jan. 26 and is in the process of moving to Brownsville, Texas, to join Starship, the reusable rocket transportation system designed to carry crew and cargo to Earth orbit, the Moon, Mars and beyond.

If that sounds mind-boggling, Hunsberger is right there beside you. "I'll be welding on Starship, which they hope to send to Mars. I think their goal is 2030," she said.

Getting a job at SpaceX is known as extremely difficult, marked by intense competition, a rigorous multi-stage interview process with many sessions and high-performance expectations. Elon Musk owns the largest individual stake in SpaceX, estimated at 42-44 percent. The private company's other major investors include Alphabet, Google's parent.

"I'm shocked. It's crazy," Hunsberger said, "walking through all these huge rockets. I didn't think that was where (applying) was going to take me. Just getting the phone interview was crazy to me. 'We'll fly you out' was a huge shock. Competing with several people was stressful, but it made me more determined. They just sent us on our way when it was down to me and two other guys. I got a call the next morning and they offered me the job."

"For anybody going to SMC or debating going to college at all," Hunsberger said, "even though it seems like you might not end up anywhere 'crazy,' definitely give it a chance and see where it takes you. Not everything is easy. It was really hard getting to where I'm at, but I'm glad for all of it."

"I was just looking for a welding job," she said. "I came across the application on one of the job apps. They emailed me back that night to set up a phone interview in early December. I had one with a recruiter and a second one with a weld supervisor. After that, they scheduled me to fly out (to Brownsville before Christmas) and do a two-hour weld test. That went well. Then I had two other interviews there as well, and a written weld test. "I didn't know it was a hiring event, but when I got there the security guard said, 'You're competing against these other dudes' waiting for a shuttle to come pick us up. That was a little nerve-wracking."

"I was hands-on and didn't want to sit at a desk," though she was admittedly a "horrible welder" when she started classes at the Niles campus. "Daniel Miles (her SMC welding instructor) was a huge help in getting me where I am now in TIG welding," Hunsberger said. "He's one of the best professors, and his sternness helped me in the end. He got me in line."

Miles is strict "and we didn't get along at first," she said. "My first semester he almost kicked me out of class for being late. He was excited" about her applying but tried to keep her feet on the ground with realistic expectations.

TIG welding (Tungsten Inert Gas) uses a non-consumable tungsten electrode to create a high-quality, precise electric arc that melts metal, while an inert shielding gas such as argon protects the weld from contamination, resulting in clean, strong welds ideal for aluminum, stainless steel and thin metals in aerospace work.

The welder manually feeds a filler rod into the weld pool for reinforcement, offering exceptional control and aesthetics but requiring more skill than other methods, such as MIG.

Teams weld different sections of rockets. "Some hang from harnesses," she noticed. "When individual parts are done, they bring (the assembly) to a mega bay and weld it all together with everything inside."

Hunsberger is the daughter of an electrician who got interested in welding helping her dad around the barn as a girl.

To complete her one-year certificate, she also completed an internship with a Lawrence company.

DATA CENTER

From page A1

rest all spoke explicitly against it.

"This is not a community that's gonna take it sitting down," said one commenter.

Other commenters requested such data centers be classified as "special land use", noting increased regulatory processes and transparency for citizens.

"You can have all proposed centers provide environmental impact assessments, studies on noise and vibration, traffic and utility, air pollution, water conservation plans," said another commenter. "These are things that they have to pay for. These are things that would not be on the taxpayer, that would, again, help in the application process."

"We all share the same water table," noted the final commenter.

Mayor Patrick Bakeman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted the importance of public discourse.

"I think the way we show up for meetings says a lot about us, how we operate, how we talk to each other, how we agree to disagree, or come to new conclusions," he said.

The mayor explained that the city council was navigating the concerns of all parties involved in the data center, including those of residents, and would make decisions based on the facts available to them. He noted the city was working from a single press release, that the company had already been operating for four years, and that, after research, he opposed the moratorium.

He emphasized work in the city to improve ordinances and increase government transparency through releasing meeting agendas earlier and streaming meetings online.

"We care about this community," Bakeman said.

The City Council also approved the event application for the 2026 Dowagiac PrideFest and appointed Justin Doyle to the Planning Commission.

MEETING

From page A1

using information from the Michigan State University Agriculture department.

A draft of the new Village Master Plan is currently under review for adjustments. Once changed, the plan will be sent to the Planning Commission for approval before reaching the Village Council for their vote.

Village offices will be closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Jan. 19. The Cassopolis Area Utilities Authority will meet at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20. The next regular Village Council meeting will take place at 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 9.

CONTESTANTS

From page A1

Dowagiac Union High School and Southwestern Michigan College

Platform title: "Kicking down Barriers"

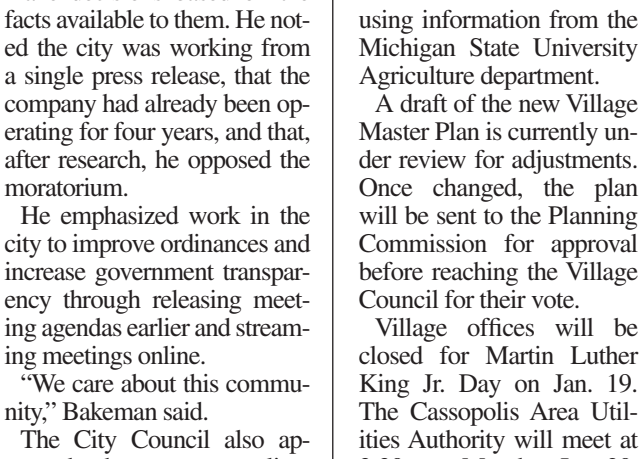
Amiah Hall

Contestant Number: 11

Parents/Guardians: Aleasha Tidey and Robert Hall

School Attending: Dowagiac Union High School

Platform title: "Shaped by Compassion"



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Sports

Brandywine dominates St. Joseph in showdown
Page B2

Got results?
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Laubach's historic night lifts Edwardsburg over Berrien Springs

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — Shelby Laubach etched her name into the Edwardsburg history books Monday night in front of a home crowd.

The junior guard scored a school-record 40 points to lead the Eddies to a 55-52 win over Berrien Springs.

"I thought the girls played hard and showed a great deal of resilience against Berrien Springs," said Edwardsburg Head Coach Scott Rodesiler. We were up 10, then had a rough third quarter and gave up the lead, but kept fighting until the end to pull out the victory."

The Eddies took a 23-17 lead into halftime. Laubach was a force inside and outside the arc, with four of her 12 baskets being 3-pointers. She was also able to attack the basket and get to the free throw line, making 10 of 14 from the stripe.

"Shelby was on another level last night," Rodesiler said. "She was efficient in her scoring, and stayed consistent throughout the whole game, scoring 17 in the first half and 23 in the second. Her teammates set good screens and kept getting the ball to Shelby; She had a couple of finishes at the rim that were incredible. Her drive, determination, and will to lead the team has been impressive. A quote by Jim Valvano sums up Shelby's historic night, 'Success is not an accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, a love of what you are doing.'"

Kya Shier and Mallory Schrock had seven points each for Edwardsburg. Adeline Weber led Berrien Springs with 16 points and Zion Ellis scored 11 points.

Tuesday, Jan. 13

Three Rivers 44, Edwardsburg 41

Just one day after earning a hard-fought win over Berrien Springs, the Edwardsburg girls basketball team found itself on the other side of the coin against Three Rivers.

A late Eddies rally came up short against Three Rivers in a 44-41 loss in the team's second game in as many days.

The game was tied 8-8 after one quarter and 19-19 at halftime, with the Wildcats using an 18-8 advantage in the third quarter to take a 37-27 lead into the fourth quarter. The Eddies fought valiantly, but ultimately fell short.

See **LAUBACH**, page B1

Photo courtesy of Jeff Douglas
Shelby Laubach scored a school-record 40 points in a 55-52 win over Berrien Springs.

Benton Harbor gets big win against Brandywine 83-49

By BEN SANDERS
For Leader Publications

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Benton Harbor dominated every aspect of Tuesday's boys basketball game except free-throw shooting.

The Tigers, ranked No. 4 in Division 2, won 83-49 to improve to 14-0 on the season.

Brandywine (7-4) struggled with turnovers from the outset, and Benton Harbor turned them into easy scoring opportunities. The Tigers didn't convert those chances early on, missing several layups as well as their first eight free-throw attempts, and only led 14-12 after one quarter.

"I really reward their defense tonight," Benton Harbor coach Corey Sterling said. "Their hands were in the passing lanes, we were plugging the gaps on their best player, getting a lot of steals. We had 10 steals at halftime, but we were missing a lot of bunnies around the rim that we usually don't miss, and a lot of free throws."

Benton Harbor began to pull away in the second quarter. Myron Rice scored 11 of his team-high 24 points in the period to help the Tigers build a 42-24 halftime lead. Brandywine's turnover troubles hit their worst point in the quarter.

"The kids had no energy tonight," Brandywine coach Nathan Knapp said. "When you play a team like Benton Harbor and you show you have no energy, it's going to get ugly quick. One time, the five-minute mark of the second quarter, I think we went 12 possessions without even getting a shot off."

See **BIG WIN**, page B1

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications
The Brandywine boys hoops team fell to unbeaten Benton Harbor 83-49 Tuesday.

Freeman: Notre Dame must 'leave no doubt' in making CFP

By COLLEEN KANE
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

CHICAGO — Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman spoke with reporters Wednesday for the first time since the Irish were left out of the College Football Playoff.

He touched on multiple topics, including addressing some big additions through the transfer portal. Here are six things Freeman said:

Freeman preaches to his players that they need to "leave no doubt" when it comes to the College Football Playoff

The "Here Come the Irish" docuseries on Peacock recently showed the moment the Irish coaches and players found out that Alabama and Miami made the CFP over them.

Freeman stared at the video screen with his mouth open. Players put their faces in their hands.

Freeman said Wednesday that he thought the series properly captured the disappointment and confusion they felt. A month later, he said there's still disappointment for the Irish, who had been ranked No. 9 or 10 up until the selection show. Miami, which will play Indiana in the national championship Monday, received the last spot in the 12-team CFP.

"But you have to move forward, and that's what we've done as a program," Freeman said. "That's what I've done as a leader. As I reminded the group in our team meeting on Sunday, it's our responsibility to make sure we leave no doubt. We can't blame it on somebody else. Although I may be confused about some of the criteria and the committee's rankings and all those different things, it's our job as we move forward to make sure we leave no doubt."

Freeman said he hasn't second-guessed his team's decision to skip a bowl game after being left out of the CFP. He said he was proud of how the captains made the decision and didn't believe it was an emotional one.

He asked them again and again if they were sure about the decision.

"Because I didn't want them to regret it," Freeman said. "And they were convicted in their decision, and I fully support them."

Freeman said his immediate future is to be the head coach at Notre Dame

Freeman's name has popped up a few times in this NFL hiring cycle. But he announced he was staying at Notre Dame on Dec. 29, when he posted on social media: "2026…run it back"

Freeman noted that he always tells his players that the future is uncertain.

See **FREEMAN**, page B1

Buchanan dampens Dowagiac Winter Homecoming with basketball sweep

By SCOTT HASSINGER
For Leader Publications

DOWAGIAC – The Buchanan boys' basketball team leaned on its senior class in disposing of host and Lakeland Conference foe Dowagiac 52-19 Friday on Winter Homecoming Night.

Buchanan earned a 57-39 victory over Dowagiac in the girls' game.

In the boys' contest, Buchanan, which has nine seniors on its 15-man roster, overcame some early foul trouble and Dowagiac's zone defense by using a solid rebounding effort in the second half to cruise to the easy win.

"Our two best guards got into some early foul trouble. We got the ball inside early, but some of those shots just didn't fall against Dowagiac's zone. We turned things up more in the second half. When you rebound better like we did those last couple quarters you can run more," said long-time Buchanan head coach Reid McBeth.

Dowagiac grabbed a pair of early leads to start the ballgame, including a big three pointer by junior guard A'shjionn Nickens that put the Chieftains in front 5-4. But the Bucks, now 5-4 overall and 1-3 Lakeland, used a Brody Lange deuce and two free throws from Bem Bosse to secure a 8-5 advantage at the end of the first quarter.

Senior Zander Ruiz-Grant came off the bench and scored nine of his 13 points during the second quarter to help Buchanan outscore Dowagiac 14-4 and expand its lead to 22-9 entering halftime.

"We've seen that kind of effort out of Zander at different points this season. Sometimes it just takes making one shot to change things when you're struggling," Reid McBeth said.

Buchanan used a stifling defensive effort to force several turnovers that led to easy buckets during a third quarter that saw the Bucks outscore the Chieftains 15-1 and build a commanding 37-10 lead entering the fourth quarter.

Liam McBeth, son of Buchanan's long-time head coach Reid McBeth, made a pair of key three pointers, during the third, while senior teammate Marley Hinds added a triple and the Bucks also got four points from Bosse in the pivotal stanza.

Scott Hassinger / Leader Publications
Reese Berry (0) from Buchanan has her shot contested by Dowagiac's Zabrina Shivers (20).

See **SWEEP**, page B1

Brandywine runs past St. Joseph

By BEN SANDERS
For Leader Publications

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

The Brandywine girls basketball team defeated St. Joseph 67-37 Monday night.

NILES — Brandywine girls basketball is showing no signs of slowing down.

The Bobcats graduated much of last year's Division 3 state semifinalists, but look just as good this season. They had no trouble handing St. Joseph its first loss on Monday, winning 67-37 to improve to 9-0.

"This is a year we lost seven girls who were four-year varsity players from last year," Brandywine coach Josh Hood said. "It's like 'Is Brandywine going to come back to the pack?' They had a really good offseason. They just buy in to the principles of our program. That's just working hard, holding yourself accountable, playing great team defense, the non-negotiables. They bought in from day one, and so here they are sitting at 9-0."

Brandywine took control immediately, scoring the game's first 13 points. St. Joseph (6-1) had turned the ball over eight times before getting on the board.

"That's what they do to people," St. Joseph coach Jeff Wallace said. "They take them out of their rhythm and speed them up. It's a bad combination when you're turning the ball over and also not getting good shots."

Mackenna Price scored 10 points in the first quarter to help Brandywine take a 20-6 lead. She left the game briefly in the second quarter after taking a hard fall, but it didn't slow down the Bobcats, who pushed their lead to 41-14 by halftime.

Lily Gill led Brandywine with 21 points and was one of four double-digit scorers. Mackenna Price finished with 13, freshman Zaya Price added 12 and Karleigh Byrd scored 10.

"I think what makes these girls dangerous is they can all shoot, they can all attack," Hood said. "Seems like every night we've had a different leading scorer."

Lainie Dorow did most of the scoring for St. Joseph, finishing with 21 points. Dorow scored 12 of the Bears' 14 first-half points, and helped her teammates get involved during a more even second half.

"Lainie is a calming influence," Wallace said. "I thought she played strong once we got settled into exactly what we were trying to do."

St. Joseph sophomore standout Lauer Wright finished with seven points after being held scoreless in the first half.

"You've got to try to hold those two (Dorow and Wright) in check and make somebody else beat you, and it's hard," Hood said. "They did a really good job in the second half of adjusting and doing some things to get those girls the ball. Jeff's such a good coach, you've got to try to adjust to what he's going to do because you know he's going to make adjustments and he did in the second half."

The respect between the coaches is mutual, dating back to Wallace's first tenure leading the Bears from 2007-13. St. Joseph is hoping that the loss will prove helpful in the long run.

"We're better walking out of here than we were walking in," Wallace said. "That's really what you want every single day is to get better. That's why Josh and I schedule this game every single year. We both know that we do some similar things that can make ourselves better as we compete against each other."

FAVORS SCORES 1,000TH POINT

Niles' Brayden Favors eclipsed the 1,000-point milestone in a 74-57 win over Otsego on Monday.
Photo provided

SMC's Goins gets MCCAA honor

PMG STAFF

DOWAGIAC — SMC sophomore and former Cassopolis standout Davion Goins picked up his second MCCAA Western Conference Player of the Week honor of the season on Tuesday.

Goins was all killer, no filler on Saturday, Jan. 10, putting up 31 points, 10 rebounds and six assists against the Marian Ancilla Chargers in the 1st Source Bank Fieldhouse.

SWEEP

From page B2

Senior Owen Thompson scored six of his eight points during the fourth quarter for Buchanan, which outscored Dowagiac 15-9 in the final eight minutes.

Bosse finished with 10 points while Liam McBeth added nine, Thompson eight, Preston Payne seven and Hinds five for Buchanan, which made 21 field goal attempts, including six triples, and 4-of-4 at the free-throw stripe.

Dowagiac was led in scoring by Aiden Martin and Nickens with six points each and Riley McCaffrey and Devin Rock added three each.

The Chieftains made six field goals and went 4-of-8 at the foul stripe.

The Bucks also enjoyed a 28-19 rebounding advantage. Bosse led the Bucks ib the boards with six. John Breeland, Caiden Freeman and Riley McCaffrey all secured three rebounds apiece for Dowagiac.

First-year Dowagiac boys' coach Craig Schau said his young and inexoerienced ballclub continues to struggle at the offensive end.

"Right now we're having difficulty in scoring. The Xs and Os are there we just have to go out on the floor and execute better. In practice we are working on making the reads and repetiton. Right now we are not a the point where we can do that consistenty throughout an entire game. The kids have to continue to have pride and keep working hard to get better," said Dowagiac's boys coach.

Afterwards Buchanan's coach expressed his pleasure over his team's unselfish play through the first half of the season.

"These guys do a great job of sharing the basketball. If they see an open guy they get the ball to them. Sometimes they are too unselish, but that's what makes it fun as a coach is to see them share the wealth," Reid McBeth said.

"I think we need to get better at rebounding because we aren't that big. These kids play hard and nobody is going to be able to take that away from us. We share the ball so we are fun to watch in that respect. The things we can control like our shots and effort are key."

Girls Game

Buchanan's young talent stepped up against Dowagiac in the girls' contest.

The Lady Bucks were led in scoring by two of its four freshmen. Gabby Carson, Buchanan's 6-foot-2 starting center, poured in a game-high 23 points while guard Reese Berry contributed 19 and senior Aspen Berry added 10 points.

Buchanan, now 3-4 overall and 3-1 in the Lakeland, made 23 field goals, including five triples, and 6-of-17 from the free-throw line.

"We put in a new press a couple days ago similar to our Buck Press where we have someone guarding the ball and two in the back. Last year in eighth grade our freshmen ran that type of press and it worked very well for them. You have Gabby, Reese and Harper Griffith who are all super athletic kids for us. I thought that press was effective for us. We'd get a steal and score and it game us some good momentum swings," said Buchanan head coach Alex Austin.

"We are definitely trying to get the ball down low a great deal as well with Gabby underneath and she's still growing. Offensively I was pleased with our ball movement tonight. We didn't take alot of shots tonight but when we had them we took advantage of open opportunities. What I like most about this team is the trajectory and how much we are growing like a family," Austin said.

Dowagiac, which falls to 2-6 overall and 0-3 Lakeland, was paced in scoring by sophmore forward Bree Campbell with 15 points, including all five of her team's six triples on the evening. Niyah Moss and Marlie Carenter contributed seven points apiece for the Lady Chieftains.

Carpenter had a tough night after getting herself into foul trouble. She picked up her third foul late in the first half and her fourth near the end of the third period.

Buchanan scored the first six points of the night and jumped out to a 8-2 advantage after one quarter. The Lady Chieftains managed just two free throws by Moss in that stanza.

A 16-10 run by Buchanan during the second quarter put the Lady Bucks in front at halftime by double digits, 24-12. Reese Berry, Aspen Berry and Kate Holloway all knocked down three pointers in that stanza for the Lady Bucks.

Buchanan's 17-10 surge during the third quarter put them in front 41-22 entering the fourth.

Dowagiac managed to outscore its guests 17-16 in the final eight minutes, but it was a little bit too late for the Lady Chieftains.

Both teams grabbed 31 rebounds. Carson hauled down 15 boards to finish the night with a double-double on the boards and in the scoring column. Reese Berry added five boards for the Lady Bucks.

"Buchanan was more disciplined than us. Their press worked and they executed better than we did. We rushed things and made some silly turnovers. We have to work on our pace. I want us to play quick, but not in a hurry. Also we have to be more disciplined on our defensive assignments. We didn't close out on their shooters. I like the resiliency of this team though. These kids will let this roll off and come back ready to work," said Dowagiac first-year girls' coach Eric Charles.

Dowagiac's top rebounders were Zabrina Shivers with seven and Campbell and Lanijiyah Moss grabbed six each and Claire Hess had five.

BIG WIN

From page B2

Brandywine had a memorable comeback win at home against Benton Harbor in 2024, but the Tigers were determined not to let that happen again, pushing the margin up over 30 before bringing on the bench in the final minutes.

"Our mentality was it was 0-0 coming out of the half," Sterling said. "We were up 20 two years ago here, undefeated, and we ended up losing, so I was pleased that my guys kept their foot on the gas."

Kesean Hobbs added 20 points and four assists for the Tigers, and Damonee McBride had a huge all-around game with 19 points, 11 rebounds, nine steals and seven assists.

"(McBride) is really oozing his confidence lately," Sterling said. "He had a game last week, 30 points and 20 rebounds, I think he's really hitting his stride. I think the team chemistry is better too. We're starting to find one another in key spots."

Brandywine was 11-for-12 from the foul line, while Benton Harbor finished just 7-for-21. Nylen Goins scored a game-high 26 points to lead the Bobcats, who have now lost four of their last five after a 6-0 start.

"We're in that mid-season little slump right now," Knapp said. "Hopefully we can just get our heads on our shoulders and just head in the right direction."

LAUBACH

From page B2

A day after setting the school record for points in a game, Shelby Laubach stuffed the stat sheet with 28 points, eight rebounds, seven steals, three assists and four blocked shots. Kya Shier had eight points, five rebounds and two steals and Liyah Worthington added five points, four rebounds and two blocked shots.

Shyann Thomas-Flanery pulled down four rebounds and Mallory Schrock had three steals.

Dani Glass led Three Rivers (2-4,2-2) with 13 points and Raja Reyes added seven points.

FREEMAN

From page B2

"But everything I want and everything that I need personally can be achieved right here as a head coach of this program," he said. "And so I hope this is something we have to address every year. I really do because it means we're having a lot of success right here at Notre Dame."

Freeman said he has used discussions with NFL teams to gather information and learn how he can be a better coach. He said he didn't know if an NFL job would interest him at some point in the future.

"I don't know enough about it," he said." Maybe sometime in the future, if it's the right time and it's what I think is right for me, then maybe I'll pursue it. But I don't love wasting time thinking about things that aren't right in front of me, and so I don't know what I will want in however much length of time from now. I know right now that I am as convicted and motivated to be the best head coach of the Notre Dame football program as I can be."

Freeman believes the Notre Dame-USC rivalry will be revived in the future

Last month, Notre Dame and USC put their 96-game rivalry series on pause because they couldn't agree to the timing of the 2026 game. The Irish then scheduled BYU for a home-and-home series instead.

Freeman said he believes the rivalry is "important for college football" and the athletic department leaders will work to get it back at some point. But he said the proposed timing wasn't best for Notre Dame and its 2026 CFP pursuit.

"I'm a competitive individual, right?" Freeman said. "And I want to go play anytime, anywhere, but at the same token, it's important that I make decisions too that are best for the program. And to move a game that we were pretty sure was going to be Week 12 to Week 0 isn't what's best for our program. And they had to make decisions that were best for their program. I don't blame them. They had to make decisions. We had to make decisions."

Freeman said he "behaved in a respectful and professional manner while protecting my family" during a recent incident at his son's wrestling event

Freeman believes his family's name was "dragged through the mud unnecessarily" over a recent interaction at a high school wrestling tournament.

An assistant high school wrestling coach, identified by the South Bend Tribune as Chris Fleeger, accused Freeman of battery at the event, saying Freeman pushed him with two hands. But the St. Joseph County prosecutor's office said it determined through video evidence and interviews that no criminal battery occurred, and Freeman won't be charged.

"I was confident in this outcome because I know I did not intentionally touch anyone in a rude, angry or disrespectful way," Freeman said. "I'm glad this matter has been thoroughly reviewed and resolved."

Freeman took issue of the initial reporting of the incident by the South Bend Tribune before all of the evidence was released.

Notre Dame said in a statement Sunday that the wrestling coach verbally accosted Freeman's son, Vinny, a senior who signed to wrestle at Cornell, and Freeman and his wife tried to remove their son from the situation.

"I know I'm a public figure, and I understand the scrutiny that comes with that," Freeman said. "That scrutiny should not extend to my children or any other child of a public figure."

Freeman is happy to get a pair of wide receivers on Notre Dame's second try

The Irish recently announced the additions of former Ohio State wide receivers Quincy Porter and Mylan Graham.

Porter was the nation's fifth-ranked wide receiver and the No. 1 player from New Jersey in the 2025 class. He had four catches for 59 yards in four games as an Ohio State freshman after missing some time with an injury.

Graham, who was a five-star prospect and the nation's fifth-ranked receiver in 2024, had six catches for 93 yards in 2025.

"We knew a lot about them in the high school recruiting process, who they were, the type of players they are," Freeman said. "And I'm glad we were able to get them."

Notre Dame also landed in the portal former Alabama edge rusher Keon Keeley, who was a five-star recruit ranked No. 2 in the 247Sports composite rankings in 2023. Keeley originally had committed to Notre Dame out of high school before flipping to Alabama.

Freeman called it "a little delayed gratification."

"I've always believed Keon was a Notre Dame kid coming from his high school," he said. "He's such a unique individual. He's a very talented football player. … When he came on his visit, I'm like, 'Yep, it's the same Keon we recruited a couple years ago.' And he fits here, and I'm excited for his future."

Freeman gives injury updates on two of his linebackers

Freeman said linebacker Drayk Bowen had surgery on the labrum in his hip, but he expects him to return in some capacity this spring.

The Irish expect linebacker Kyngstonn Viliamu-Asa to be back to full-go around the start of the 2026 season. He is recovering from an ACL injury.

Classifieds Marketplace

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF BERRIEN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE AND CREDITORS NOTICE

FILE NO 2025-0013-DE-J

ESTATE OF JOHN HOWARD STRAUSS
Date of Birth: May 14, 1947

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including creditors and heirs of the deceased whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

Be advised that a Petition for Determination of Heirs has been filed with the Court and a hearing on said Petition will be held on February 10, 2026, at 10:35 A.M. via Zoom through the Berrien County Court House, 811 Port Street, Niles, Michigan 49120.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Decedent, John Howard Strauss, who lived at 925 Plym Road, Niles, Michigan, died November 3, 2025.

Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Nancy Strauss, named personal representative, or to the probate court at 811 Port Street, Saint Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the named personal representative within four (4) months after the date of publication of this notice

January 17, 2026

Robert L. Landgraf, Jr. (P23000)
Attorney
Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269) 683 - 8300

Nancy Strauss
Petitioner
c/o Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120-1310

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-0910-DE-J

Court address
811 Port Street, St Joseph, Michigan 49085 Court
telephone no.
269.983.7111

Estate of:
Diane Shirley Hill
Date of birth:* 10/13/1946

TO ALL CREDITORS:**

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Diane Shirley Hill, died 09/07/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Heather Kim Alcazar, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

01/12/2026
Date

Brian M. Holt P64659
Attorney name Bar no.
210 E. Main St, Ste 85
Address
Niles, Michigan 49120
City, state, zip
269.262.1984
Telephone no.

Heather Kim Alcazar
Personal representative
2530 Amanda Court NE
Address
Piedmont, Oklahoma 73078
City, state, zip
904-860-1782
Telephone no.

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF BERRIEN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE AND CREDITORS NOTICE

FILE NO 2025-09797-DE-J

ESTATE OF: William Harvey Pfifer
Date of Birth: October 30, 1948

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including creditors and heirs of the deceased whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

Be advised that a Petition for Determination of Heirs has been filed with the Court and a hearing on said Petition will be held on February 10, 2026, at 10:10 A.M. via Zoom through the Berrien County Court House, 811 Port Street, Niles, Michigan 49120

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Decedent, Mike Edward Chamberlin, who lived at 1005 Winchester Ct, Niles, Michigan, died November 3, 2025.

Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Shad Pfifer, named personal representative, or to the probate court at 811 Port Street, Saint Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the named personal representative within four (4) months after the date of publication of this notice.

January 17, 2026

Robert L. Landgraf, Jr. (P23000)
Attorney
Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269) 683 - 8300

Shad Pfifer
Petitioner
c/o Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120-1310

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF BERRIEN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE AND CREDITORS NOTICE

FILE NO 2025-1004-DE-M

ESTATE OF: Sondra Kay Bell
Date of Birth: October 25, 1961

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including creditors and heirs of the deceased whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

Be advised that a Petition for Determination of Heirs has been filed with the Court and a hearing on said Petition will be held on **February 3, 2026, at 9:15 A.M.** via Zoom through the Berrien County Court House, 811 Port Street, Niles, Michigan 49120.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Decedent, Sondra Kay Bell, who lived at 1363 Eagle Street, Niles, Michigan, died August 11, 2025. Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Ronald Allen Linde, named personal representative, or to the probate court at 811 Port Street, Saint Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the named personal representative within four (4) months after the date of publication of this notice.

January 17, 2026

Robert L. Landgraf, Jr. (P23000)
Attorney
Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269) 683 - 8300

Ronald Allen Linde
Petitioner
c/o Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120-1310

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-331-DE
JUDGE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Estate of:
Kenneth Ray Witt
Date of birth: 04/05/1970

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Kenneth Ray Witt, died 11/20/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Harvey Witt, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 11/13/2025

Stephen K. Woods P54528
Attorney name Bar no.
156 South Broadway
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
269-445-2658
Telephone

Harvey Witt
Personal representative
21575 Puterbaugh Lane
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
574-340-0213
Telephone

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
MILTON TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MI
32097 Bertrand St, Niles, MI 49120

To: The residents and property owners of Milton Township, Cass County Michigan and any other interested parties.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE the Planning Commission of Milton Township, Cass County Michigan will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, commencing at 7:00 p.m., at the Milton Township Hall, 32097 Bertrand St, Niles MI 49120.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE the Planning Commission is considering an amendment to Milton Township Zoning Ordinance, as follows:

Section 1. Amendment of Chapter 5 – Agricultural Production District. Section 5.02, Uses Permitted by Right of the Milton Township Zoning Ordinance is amended by adding:
Short Term Rentals.

Section 2. Amendment of Chapter 6 – Rural Residential District. Section 6.02, Uses Permitted by Right of the Milton Township Zoning Ordinance is amended by adding:
Short Term Rentals.

Section 3. Amendment of Chapter 7 – Single Family Residential District. Section 7.02, Uses Permitted by Right of the Milton Township Zoning Ordinance is amended by adding:
Short Term Rentals.

Section 4. Amendment of Chapter 3, by adding Section 3.33. Section 3.33 of the Milton Township Zoning Ordinance is amended to read in its entirety as follows:

1. Definitions.
2. Applicability
3. Registration required.
4. Short-Term Rental Regulations.
5. Violations; revocation of registration.

The full ordinance can be viewed at the Township office or on the Township website.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that written comments will be taken from any interested persons concerning the foregoing proposed amendment, at the Milton Township Hall, at the address set forth above, at any time during regular business hours up to 4:00 o'clock p.m. on the date of said hearing and will further be received by the Planning Commission at the time of said hearing.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that all persons interested in the foregoing are invited to be present at the aforesaid Public Hearing time and place to participate in the discussion. More information can be obtained by calling Milton Township at 269-591-7982. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services, and wish to attend the hearing, should contact the office of the Township Clerk, by writing or calling the Clerk, at least five (5) days prior to the hearing to ensure needed accommodations.

Kristen Barrera, Clerk, Milton Township Planning Commission

NOTICE OF DEFAULT AND FORECLOSURE SALE WHEREAS on 06/24/2016, a certain Home Equity Conversion Mortgage was executed by Marvin R. Williams and Marianne J. Williams, husband and wife, as mortgagor in favor of Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns, as mortgagee, and was recorded on 06/30/2016 in Liber 1107, Page 2471 Cass County Records; and WHEREAS, the Mortgage was insured by the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (the "Secretary") pursuant to the National Housing Act for the purpose of providing single family housing; and WHEREAS, the Mortgage is now owned by the Secretary, through mesne assignments as documented by an Assignment of Mortgage, dated 10/03/2024 and recorded 10/08/2024 in Liber 1251, Page 1903 Cass County Records; and WHEREAS, default has been made in the covenants and conditions of the Mortgage in that Marianne J. Williams, Marvin R. Williams is/are deceased and the property described below is not the principal residence of at least one surviving Borrower; and WHEREAS, the entire amount delinquent as of December 16, 2025 is $111,375.92; and WHEREAS, by virtue of this default, the Secretary has declared the entire amount of the indebtedness secured by the mortgage to be immediately due and payable; NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to powers vested in me by the Single Family Mortgage Foreclosure Act of 1994, 12 U.S.C. 3751 et seq., by 24 CFR part 27, subpart B, and by the Secretary's designation of me as Foreclosure Commissioner, Recorded October 7, 2024 in Liber 1251, Page 1891 Cass County Records, notice is hereby given that on March 16, 2026 at 1:00 PM local time, the real property located in the Village of Cassopolis, County of Cass, State of Michigan, the below described will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder: THE EAST 66.00 FEET OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED PARCEL OF LAND: PART OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 25, TOWN 6 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST, VILLAGE OF CASSOPOLIS, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE WEST LINE OF SAID SECTION, WHICH IS SOUTH 692.66 FEET FROM THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 89 DEGREES 26 MINUTES 10 SECONDS EAST, ALONG THE SOUTH LINE OF GRAHAM STREET AND ITS EXTENSION, 535.68 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 1 OF THE RECORDED PLAT OF "FAIR GROUND HEIGHTS ADDITION"; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 01 MINUTES 48 SECONDS WEST, ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOT 1, AND ITS EXTENSION, 149.87 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89 DEGREES 18 MINUTES 47 SECONDS WEST, 535.64 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO THE WEST SECTION LINE; THENCE NORTH ALONG SAID WEST SECTION LINE, 148.56 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. Commonly known as: 484 Graham St, Cassopolis, MI 49031 Tax Parcel No.: 14-041-125-022-80 The sale will be held at the back entrance, ground floor, 120 N. Broadway St., Cassopolis, MI 49031. The United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development will bid $116,454.38. There will be no proration of taxes, rents or other income or liabilities, except that the purchaser will pay, at or before closing, their pro rata share of any real estate taxes that have been paid by the Secretary to the date of the foreclosure sale. When making their bids, all bidders, except the Secretary, must submit a deposit totaling $11,645.44 [10% of the Secretary's bid] in the form of a certified check or cashier's check, made payable to the Secretary of HUD. A deposit need not accompany each oral bid. If the successful bid is oral, a deposit of $11,645.44 must be presented before the bidding is closed. The deposit is nonrefundable. The remainder of the purchase price must be delivered within 30 days of the sale or at such other time as the Secretary may determine for good cause shown, time being of the essence. This amount, like the bid deposits, must be delivered in the form of a certified or cashier's check. If the Secretary is the high bidder he/she/they need not pay the bid amount in case. The successful bidder will pay all conveying fees, all real estate and other taxes that are due on or after the delivery date of the remainder of the payments and all other costs associated with the transfer of title. At the conclusion of the sale, the deposits of the unsuccessful bidders will be returned to them. The Secretary may grant an extension of time within which to deliver the remainder of the payment. All extensions will be for 15-day increments for a fee of $500.00, paid in advance. The extension fee shall be in the form of a certified or cashier's check made payable to the Secretary of HUD. If the high bidder closes the sale prior to the expiration of any extension period, the unused portion of the extension fee shall be applied toward the amount due. If the high bidder is unable to close the sale within the required period, or within any extensions of time granted by the Secretary, the high bidder may be required to forfeit the case deposit or, at the election of the foreclosure commissioner after the consultation with the HUD representative, will be liable to HUD for any costs incurred as a result of such failure. The Commissioner may, at the direction of the HUD representative, offer the property to the second highest bidder for an amount equal to the highest price offered by that bidder. There is no right of redemption, or right of possession based upon a right of redemption, in the mortgagor or others subsequent to a foreclosure completed pursuant to the Act. Therefore, the Foreclosure Commissioner will issue a Deed to the purchaser(s) upon receipt of the entire purchase price in accordance with the terms of the sale as provided herein. HUD does not guarantee that the property will be vacant. The scheduled foreclosure sale shall be cancelled or adjourned if it is established, by documented written application of the mortgagor to the Foreclosure Commissioner not less than 3 days before the date of sale, or otherwise, that the default or defaults upon which the foreclosure is based did not exist at the time of service of this notice of default and foreclosure sale, or all amounts due under the mortgage agreement are tendered to the Foreclosure Commissioner, in the form of a certified or cashier's check payable to the Secretary of HUD, before public auction of the property is completed. Payment of the entire outstanding balance of the mortgage debt is required to the cure the default. The "outstanding balance" includes amounts that would be due under the mortgage agreement if the debt under the mortgage had not been accelerated, advertising costs, posting costs and postage expenses incurred in giving notice, mileage by the most reasonable road distance for posting notices, reasonable and customary costs incurred for title and lien record searches, the necessary out-of-pocket costs incurred by the Foreclosure Commissioner for recorded documents, a commission for the Foreclosure and all other costs incurred in connection with the foreclosure prior to sale. Tender of payment be certified or cashier's check or applicable for cancellation of the foreclosure sale shall be submitted to the address of the Foreclosure Commissioner provided below. Date: 01/07/2026 Neil Sherman Foreclosure Commissioner for the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development 23938 Research Dr Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 STATE OF MICHIGAN COUNTY OF OAKLAND ss. On this 01/07/2026, before me, a Notary Public in and for said County of Oakland, came Neil Sherman of Schneiderman & Sherman P.C., the Foreclosure Commissioner, known to me to be the individual described in and who executed the above conveyance, and who acknowledged that he/she executed the same to be his/her free act and deed as such. Christina Hedke, Notary Public Wayne County, Michigan My Commission Expires: 06/21/2031 Acting in Oakland County, Michigan Drafted by and when recorded return to: Erica Nichols (P80833) Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 25-003503-1

1582189
(01-17)(01-31)

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00AM on Wednesday February 4, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE SALE –Jason Dooley and Jean Dooley, original mortgagors, granted a Mortgage to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS") acting solely as nominee for Top Flite Financial, Inc., dated November 30, 2024, and recorded December 9, 2024 as Liber 1254, Page 219; and assigned to Data Mortgage Inc., DBA Essex Mortgage by document recorded November 25, 2025 in Liber 1269, Page 516, in official records of Cass County Register of Deeds, Michigan, which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $152,673.58. The following described premises: Located in the Township of Pokagon, Cass County, Michigan: Lot(s) 18 and 19 of RIDENOUR PARK according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber LE of Plats, Page 248 of Cass County Records. Commonly known as: 33320 Ridenour Drive, Dowagiac, MI 49047 Tax Parcel ID: 14-110-200-018-00 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241, in which case the redemption period shall be 1 month, or under MCL 600.3241a 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a (b) notice, whichever is later, or extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice ATTENTION PURCHASERS: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. This notice is from a debt collector. Dated: December 22, 2025, For more information, please call: (513) 852-6066 Daniel A. Cox Wood + Lamping, LLP Attorneys for Servicer 600 Vine Street, Suite 2500, Cincinnati, OH 45202 File 25-11065 (01-03)(01-24)

ONTWA TOWNSHIP CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN
NOTICE OF ZONING ORDINANCE ADOPTION

A zoning ordinance regulating the development and use of land has been adopted by the legislative body of Ontwa Township. Notice is hereby given that during its regular meeting on January 12, 2026, the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees adopted Ordinance 2026-1-12.2, which enacts a new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map for Ontwa Township to replace the existing and prior Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map enacted on December 8, 1980, as amended, pursuant to the Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended.

A summary of the proposed new Zoning Ordinance is as follows:

Article 1: Title, Purpose, Scope, and Legal Basis
This Article discusses the title and purposes of the proposed new Zoning Ordinance. The new ordinance shall be known as the "Ontwa Township Zoning Ordinance." There are multiple purposes supporting the new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map.

Article 2: Definitions
This Article contains the definitions of various words, phrases, and clauses for purposes of the Zoning Ordinance.

Article 3: General Provisions
This Article contains general regulations that apply to a variety of different uses, activities, buildings and structure in some or all zoning districts, including but not limited to effect is zoning, outstanding applications for building permits; area frontage, and use conditions; height exceptions, essential services, principal uses, clear vision corners, fences and walls, enforcement of private deed restrictions, drainage, sewage disposal and water supply, basement and garage dwellings, keeping of animals, manufactured homes, home occupations, control of heat, glare, fumes, dust, noise, vibration, and odors; accessory buildings, private swimming pools, truck parking and recreational vehicle storage, garage and yard sales, residential dwellings, private communication antennas, unclassified uses, lot access, lot line adjustments or land divisions, wireless communication facilities, anti-funneling/anti-keyholing, wind energy systems, parks, boat launches, and boat washing facilities, small-scale solar energy systems, and man made ponds.

Article 4: Mapped Districts
Among other matters, this Article indicates that the Zoning Map is an integral part of the Zoning Ordinance, establishes various zoning districts, sets rules regarding areas not within a district, and uses not designated.

Article 5: Agricultural/Residential District "AR"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and dimensional requirements for properties in the AR Zoning District.

Article 6: Residential District "R-1A"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and dimensional requirements for properties in the R-1A Zoning District.

Article 7: Residential District "R-1"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special Article uses, and dimensional requirements for properties in the R-1 Zoning District.

Article 8: Lake Residential District "L-R"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and dimensional requirements for properties in the L-R Zoning District.

Article 9: Residential District "R-2"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and dimensional requirements for properties in the R-2 Zoning District.

Article 10: Manufactured Home Park District "M-H"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and additional requirements for properties in the M-H Zoning District.

Article 11: Multi-family Residential District "MFR"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, dimensional standards, and additional requirements for properties in the MFR Zoning District.

Article 12: Commercial/Service District "C-1"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, and dimensional standards for properties in the C-1 Zoning District.

Article 13: General Commercial District "C-2"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, dimensional standards, and additional standards for properties in the C-2 Zoning District.

Article 14: Light Industrial "I-1"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, dimensional standards, general performance standards, and environmental performance regulations for properties in the I-1 Zoning District.

Article 15: Heavy Industrial District "I-2"
This Article sets forth a description and purposes, a list of uses permitted by right, special land uses, dimensional standards, and additional standards for properties in the I-2 Zoning District.

Article 16: Waterfront Overlay District
This Article sets forth a purpose and intent statement, applicability criteria, wetland regulations, permitted and special land uses, additional regulations, and site plan review standards for properties within the Waterfront Overlay District.

Article 17: Planned Unit Developments (PUD)
This Article contains the regulations, specifications, application procedures, and other matters regarding the Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning District.

Article 18: Site Plan Review
This Article governs, regulates, and covers site plans, including, but not limited to, when site plan review and approval are required, site plan review and approval procedures, standards for site plan approval, conformity to approved site plans, changes to approved site plans, appeals, and performance guarantees on site plans.

Article 19: Site Development Requirements
This Article contains specific regulations and requirements for parking and loading, landscaping, and signs.

Article 20: Special Land Uses
This Article contains standards and regulations for the review of applications for special land use approval. It also contains standards for specific land uses, including but not limited to adult businesses, adult foster care group homes, agri-tourism establishments, auto, truck, boat and RV sales; car washes, child care group homes, education or health related institutions, gas stations, home based businesses, kennels, landfills, mining operations, outdoor cafes, drive-through uses, places of public assembly, outdoor or open air businesses, outdoor recreation uses, utility scale solar energy systems, veterinary clinics, and wireless communication facilities.

Article 21: Nonconformities
This Article sets forth a purpose and intent statement, general provisions for nonconformities, lists nonconforming uses, buildings, structures, lots of record, and requirements for nonconforming site improvements.

Article 22: Administration and Enforcement
This Article discusses and regulates many matters regarding the general administration and enforcement of the new Zoning Ordinance, as well as the penalties for violation. The topics covered by this Article include, but are not limited to, the zoning administrator, certificates of occupancy and zoning compliance, public hearing and notice requirements, zoning amendments, conditional rezoning, fees and escrow accounts, performance guarantees, zoning board of appeals, planning commission, property surveys, penalties, administrative liability, and severability.

Copies of the zoning ordinance are available for public viewing during regular business hours at the Township Hall, 26225 US 12, Edwardsburg, MI 49112, or on the Township website: www.ontwatwp.org.

The new Zoning Ordinance will go into effect on February 1, 2026.

This notice of adoption is disseminated and posted pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA110 of 2006, as amended.

Respectfully submitted by, Tina VanBelle, Ontwa Township Clerk

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF BERRIEN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE AND CREDITORS NOTICE

FILE NO 2025-1006-DE-J

ESTATE OF: Carol Lee Conway
Date of Birth: January 15, 1935

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including creditors and heirs of the deceased whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

Be advised that a Petition for Determination of Heirs has been filed with the Court and a hearing on said Petition will be held on February 10, 2026, at 10:20 A.M. via Zoom through the Berrien County Court House, 811 Port Street, Niles, Michigan 49120.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Decedent, Carol Lee Conway, who lived at 1338 Missions East Drive, Niles, Michigan, died August 11, 2025.

Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to John Robert Conway, named personal representative, or to the probate court at 811 Port Street, Saint Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the named personal representative within four (4) months after the date of publication of this notice.

January 17, 2026

Robert L. Landgraf, Jr. (P23000)
Attorney
Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269) 683 - 8300

John Robert Conway
Petitioner
c/o Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120-1310

GROUNDSKEEPER/LAWN MOWING BIDS

Wayne Township is seeking two bids: one for the position of Groundskeeper of the four township cemeteries, and the Township Hall/Fire Station, and the second for lawn mowing services for the same five properties. Complete job descriptions are available on the township website at www.waynetwpMI.org. or at the township hall. Call the township at 269-782-7027 for personal liability insurance requirements All sealed bids are to be received by 4 pm on February 2, 2026. They may be sent to Wayne Township; 53590 Glenwood Road; Dowagiac 49047 Wayne Township reserves the right to reject any or all bids received. Wayne Township is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

PUBLIC HEARING - Riverwood Center 2025 Annual Plan Submission. Wednesday, January 21, 2026 @ 4:00 PM. 1485 M-139, Benton Harbor (Bldg 2). Ric Compton, CEO

0900 LEGALS

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
Unit # Name
9/185 Candy Whitmire
10 Charmin Kelly
12 Jody & Michael Purdy
22 Amber Bedenfield
28 Emalee Anderson
67 Jerome Jankowiak
78 Douglas Demmond
82 Erica Pitone
85 Shelden Walden
94 Joshua Thompson
119 Kyle Tracey
145/467/468 Michael Merritt
148 Gloster Johnson
164 Bradley Hattenback
168 Gene Robertson
183 Cindy Fisher
184/66 Mary Anderson
190/306/533 Linda Nilson
191 Alan Smith
192 Patricia Yoder
223 Derek Baker
228/367 Shawnette Booker
240 Teyshawn Wallace
258 Briana Coon
272 Kurt Shepard
273 Tony Pompey
274 Gregory Montgomery
278 Chelsie Carlyle
284 Kathleen Peterson
342 Terrence Moss
346 DaMonica Williams
379 Bobbie Helms
389 Parnell Jenkins
410/534 Rebecca Coleman
416 Heidi Arbri
424 John Fry
429 Aaron Haynes
430 Seminar Dixon
438 Adrianna Affriso
442 Dawn Hojara
451 Jean Fitch
452 Tyler Mahar
492/676 Malawi Association
515 Danielle Flenar
525 Rick Nobles
530 Justin Landis
541 Nicole Hurt
545 Candy Whitmire
556 Matt Mazingo
557 Michelle Richter
606 Zoltan Kovach
608 Robert Conner
638 Britney Stanczyk
665 Rodney Prescott
678 Kat Domer

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.
5 Paul Welling
13 Jody & Michael Purdy
14 Brian Flick
54 Cynthia Swisher
57 Nathan Haynes

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.
57 James Colburn
189A Erica Cutter
233A Donna Lawton
242A Angela Stites
125 Kristina Hemminger
165 Sharon Helms
228 Michael Hoadley
238/466 James Diss
250 Robert Clayton/Jessica Vissik
263 Tamara Holmes
292 The Woodshed Crafts
327 Robert Davis
346 Joe Jones
377 Christy Stevens
451 Jacob Pegouskie
476 Michael Gentry
481 Natosha Libertowski
483 Michael Donoho

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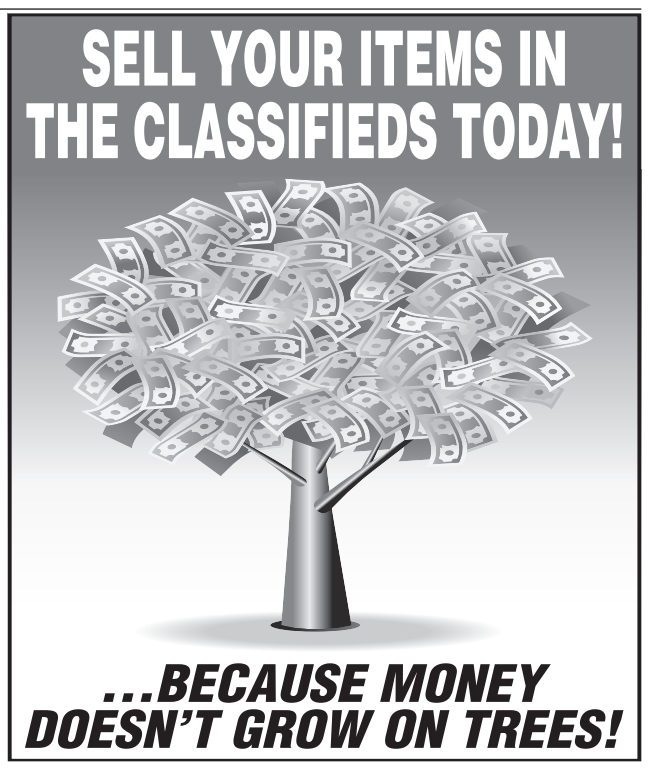

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OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Photos by Ryan Yuenger / HP correspondent

Sunlight shines though the top of a structure on the beach at Grand Mere State Park.

Take a Komorebi hike

Kindling the flame of hope in a world of darkness

Ever since I acquired my first camera in high school, my favorite subject to capture has been the sun.

Catching beams of sunlight as they bend around tree branches and leaves, framing the fiery star in a serene sunset scene and presenting the light in a way our eyes cannot perceive alone is what gives me the most joy as a photographer.

Ryan Yuenger

In between shots, I always try to breathe in the moment and bask in the scattered, dappled sunlight that filters through the trees, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow on the ground.

I recently learned the Japanese have a word for this – Komorebi. Allegedly, this word embodies the Japanese appreciation for fleeting, intricate moments in nature, representing light and hope passing through darkness.

On my best days, I try to embody this concept as a person. I aspire to be a beacon of light, like a lighthouse on the pier in the sea of chaos and pain trying to drag us all down to the depths of degradation.

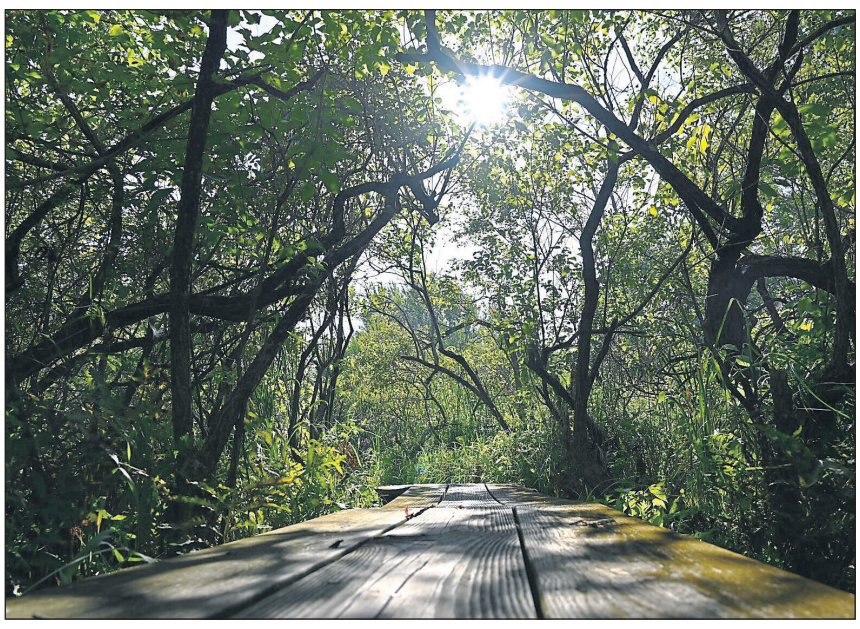
This task gets more difficult as the tribulations of life and getting older have brought new feelings of grief and despair. At times recently, it's felt like a black hole in the vacuum of space, devoid of the oxygen necessary to keep alive the flame of hope.

Yet, the burning yellow dwarf star we call our sun remains, giving life to us all and reminding me that even in the darkest places, the flame of hope persists.

For me, the best way to rekindle my personal flame is to take a walk. Whether it's a simple walk around my neighborhood or a hiking adventure in a beautiful location, getting in the walking rhythm is like kindling for the embers of light and love that burn within me.

Even on the darkest and stormiest days, there's a light behind the rain. As long as I draw breath, I plan to never let my own flame burn out, and try be the soft wind that helps rekindle the fires of those around me.

Ryan Yuenger is an HP correspondent. Send him ideas of where to hike next at ryuenger@thehp.com.



The sun dances through trees at Sarett Nature Center in Benton Harbor last summer.

The sunset glows over Lake Michigan.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Winter Bird Quest: 8 a.m.-noon Jan. 17. Join Sarett for winter birding around Berrien County, visiting a few of the best winter hot-spots to find a variety of birds visiting us for the winter. Call (269) 927-4832 to register. Members $10, Non-members $15.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

Oak-killing beetle expanding range in Southern California

By LILA SEIDMAN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — A tiny beetle responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of oak trees in Southern California has reached Ventura County, marking a troubling expansion.

This is the farthest north the goldspotted oak borer has been found in the state. Given the less-than-one-half-inch insect's track record of devastating oaks since being first detected in San Diego County in 2008, scientists and land stewards are alarmed – and working to contain the outbreak.

"We keep seeing these oak groves getting infested and declining, and a lot of oak mortality," said Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann, an ecologist with UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, or UCANR. "And as we go north, we have tons of oak woodlands that are very important ecosystems over there. It can even get into the Sierras if we don't stop it. So it is scary."

Although officials are only now reporting the arrival, they first found the beetle in Ventura County in the summer of 2024. Julie Clark, a community education specialist for UCANR, recalled getting a call from a local forester who spotted an unhealthy-looking coast live oak while driving in Simi Hills' Box Canyon.

"He saw die-back. He saw all the leaves on the crown were brown, which is one of the characteristic signs of a GSOB infestation," Clark said in a blog post, using the acronym for the invasive insect.

The forester examined the tree and found D-shaped holes – the calling card of the goldspotted oak borer – where the beetles had chewed through the tree to emerge from the bark.

Foresters debarked and chipped the highly infested tree to kill the beetles inside. Surrounding trees were not afflicted.

Still, the beetle continued its march in the county. Last April, another dead, beetle-infested oak was found in Santa Susana, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire. A month later, several more dead and injured trees were discovered.

The beetle, named for six gold spots that adorn its back, doesn't fly far. It reaches faraway areas by hitching a ride on firewood.

The beetles lay their eggs on oaks. When the larvae hatch, they bore in to reach the cambium. The cambium is like a tree's blood vessels, carrying water and nutrients up and down. The insect chews through the layer, and eventually the damage is akin to putting a permanent tourniquet on the tree.

An infested tree will often display a thinning canopy and red or black stains on the trunk, injured areas where the tree is attempting to force out insects. The "confirming sign" is the roughly eighth-inch exit hole.

Forward-facing sonar threatens Minnesota walleyes and other fish

By DENNIS ANDERSON
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

MINNEAPOLIS — The fact that Ross Petersen is a fishing guide and also a former mayor of Ely doesn't make him unique. Two other recent mayors of that small town on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness also are fishing guides.

But Petersen does stand out among both fishing pros and politicians for another reason.

He's not afraid to tell it like it is.

Petersen says forward-facing sonar (FFS) – the latest gadget being peddled to anglers as a "must-have" – is ruining Minnesota fishing.

Or will ruin it.

Muskies and crappies are particularly vulnerable to anglers who use these hi-tech fish locators.

Muskies because they show up like torpedoes on anglers' FFS video screens, allowing a stealth approach and pinpoint casting. Crappies because they can be located from up to 100 feet away before being targeted with baited hooks.

Now, in winter, crappies stand even less of a chance against the modern angler. Beneath the ice, crappies often suspend in deep water, where historically they've been a challenge to find.

But with FFS, an angler can scan a wide area beneath the ice, locate a school of crappies and drop a bait.

In these situations, some crappies are caught and kept, while others are released but die anyway due to "barotrauma," or what in humans is sometimes called decompression sickness, or "the bends."

Worried as Petersen is about muskies and crappies, he's even more concerned about the effect FFS is having on walleyes.

"These days, I only guide 10 to 12 days a year, but in the early 2000s, I guided three to five days a week, mostly on Basswood and Snowbank lakes," he said. "Most of those were day trips with tourists staying at resorts. If they were Minnesotans, they wanted walleyes. If they were from Kentucky or elsewhere in the South, it was smallmouth bass. And Californians, for whatever reason, often wanted big northerns."

Petersen could put clients on fish most of the time. But not always. Some days, the fish he found using an old-fashioned flasher – a simple type of sonar whose signal expands in a cone shape beneath a boat – wouldn't bite.

On other days, he couldn't find fish.

Now, he said, walleyes have no place to hide from anglers using FFS.

"Take Snowbank [Lake], which has had some excellent year classes of walleyes recently," he said. "It used to be that locals would go out there in August and September and maybe they couldn't find walleyes because they were too deep.

"Now you fish those lakes and you see guide boats rigged with forward-facing sonar targeting walleyes in 35 to 40 feet of water and they'll sit right over them. They might catch 30 or more, throwing the small ones back. But when they're brought up from that depth, some of them, or maybe a lot of them, die after being released."

DNR fisheries chief Brad Parsons will advocate again this year for the state's walleye limit to be cut from six to four – an initiative started before the widespread adoption of FFS by Minnesota anglers.

In the days before FFS, the cutback would have done little to protect walleyes, because few anglers caught more than one or two of these fish per outing – if that.

Now, the increasing number of anglers who are willing to pay the $3,500 or so that's required to buy a forward-facing sonar unit are able to catch many more than that.

As importantly, virtually all of the state's guides have outfitted themselves with FFS – you would, too, if your livelihood depended on it – thus increasing their efficiency on the water.

And they're on the water every day. Or most days.

So credit Parsons for being prescient and advocating for a lower walleye limit.

Yet the DNR should do much more to protect Minnesota fisheries, Petersen says, or risk losing an industry that contributes $5 billion or more a year to the Minnesota economy.

"If things keep going the way they are, the average guy with a 16-foot aluminum boat and a 15-horse outboard might as well not even go fishing," he said. "He won't have a chance."

The argument against action is that FFS is just another tool anglers use to catch fish, and that worries about its effect on muskies, crappies, walleyes and other fish are overblown.

After all, similar concerns were raised when the original Lowrance Little Green Box, the world's first transistorized sonar instrument for fishing, debuted in 1957.

This is different, Petersen says. I agree.

There's plenty of precedent for resource agencies to hit the brakes on inventions or other developments that threaten game and fish.

When the pump shotgun was first introduced, followed by the semi-auto, state and federal laws were written to limit the number of shots each could take when used for migratory bird hunting.

Punt guns also were outlawed, and live decoys, because they gave hunters an advantage.

Similarly, FFS gives Minnesota anglers an advantage they couldn't have imagined even five years ago.

There's no going back, everyone acknowledges that. But restrictions on when and where this technology can be used should be implemented, as they have been in other states.

"At the very least, the DNR should make some lakes off-limits to forward-facing sonar," Petersen said. "I've already seen them used by canoeists in the Boundary Waters, and for sure they should be outlawed there. And other lakes as well.

"I'm just sick about it. I've got five grandkids, and they all love fishing. I'm not going to buy one of those things. It's not the right way to teach fishing – by watching a video screen to find fish, and then to make sure your bait lands right in front of a fish's nose."

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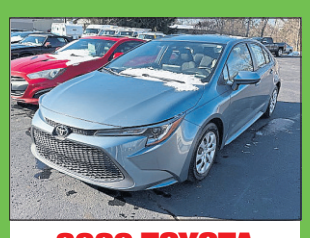

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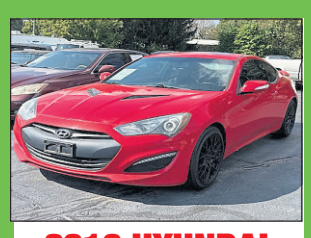

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